

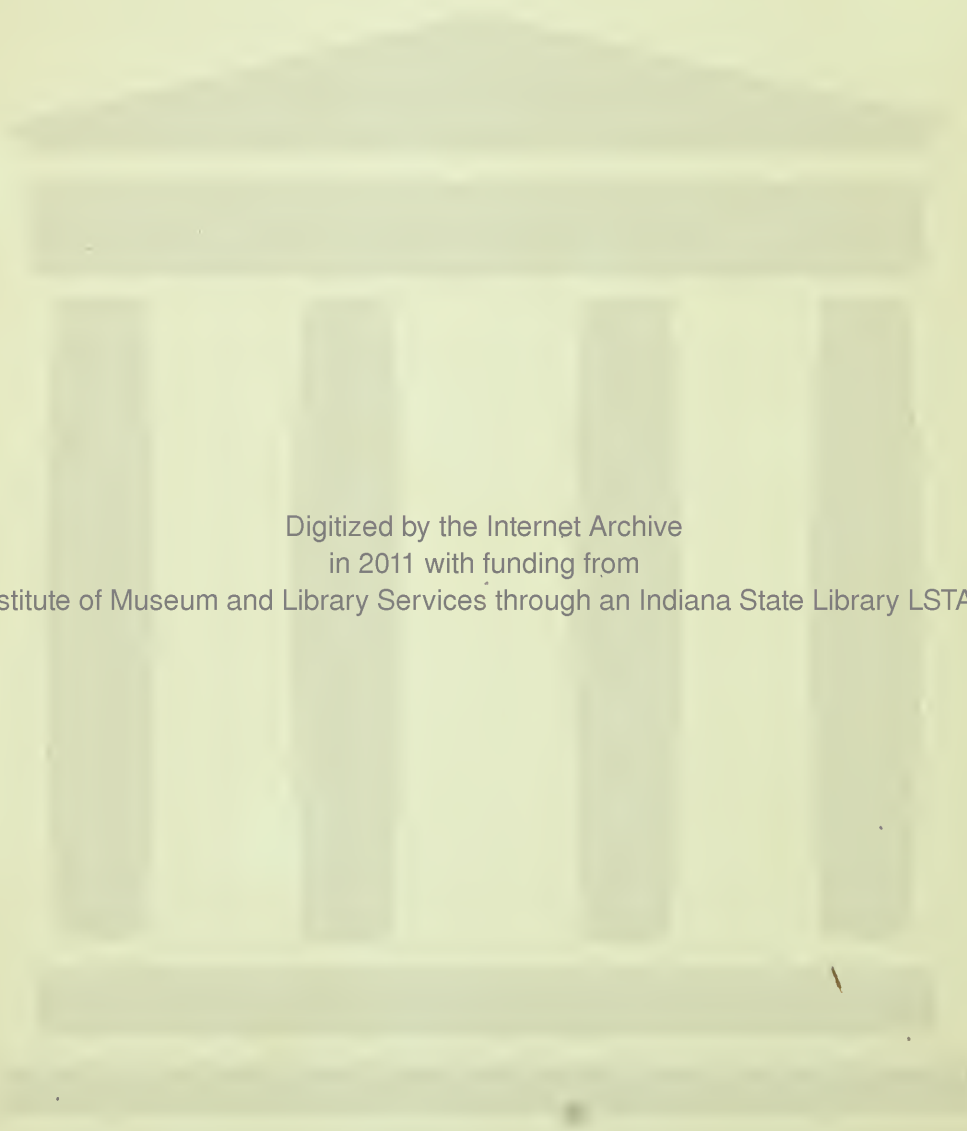
# THE STORY OF PRIMROSE

1831-1895

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COMPILED AND EDITED

BY ALBERT BARTON

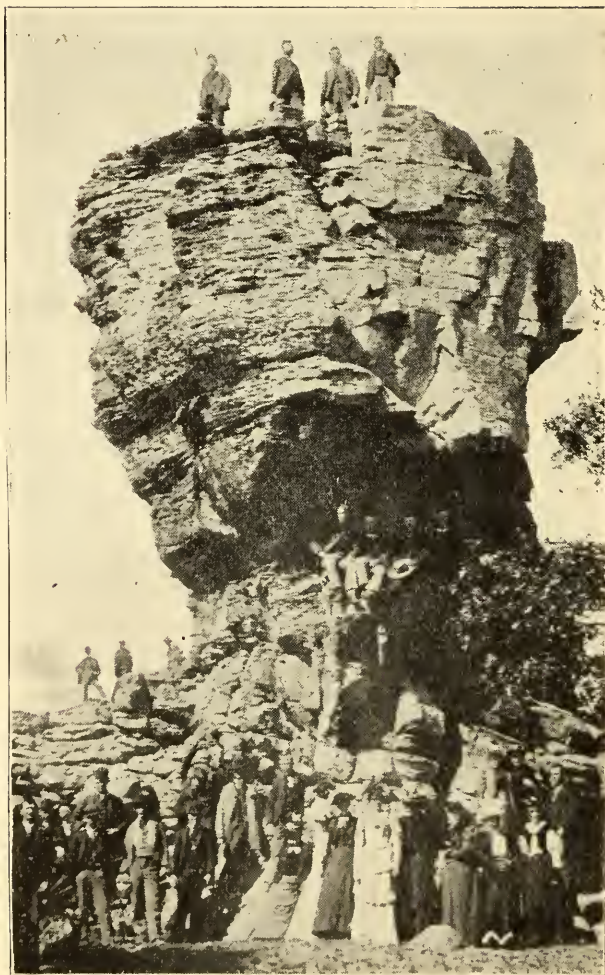


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La Follette's came to Princeton 1849-50



"DEVIL'S CHIMNEY."



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1895

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TAYLOR & GLEASON, BOOK AND JOB PRINTERS,  
MADISON, WIS.

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## EXPLANATORY.

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The writing of this history of his native town was not begun by the writer with any pecuniary end in view. The very limited number of readers whom he could hope to obtain must certainly have shown him, had such been the case, that the time spent in preparing it could have been far more profitably employed. The work, nevertheless, has been one of profit, and in the pleasure and knowledge derived from it, it has brought its own reward. To have a thorough knowledge of the history of one's region, is no small satisfaction in itself, and while the story of our town may not be so striking and romantic as that of some of its neighbors, it cannot fail to be of interest to her own children.

The history is written chiefly for the benefit of the younger generation, many of whom know little of the early happenings in their localities and of the privations of their own fathers and mothers. If this book should meet with their appreciation the writer shall feel doubly repaid. It would, of course, have been a happier achievement had this work been written by some one of the old pioneers who have witnessed and lived through all the changing scenes in the town's history, but as no one such has seen fit to do so, he trusts the work of younger hands will be spared any censure in undertaking it. The many errors and shortcomings that the work doubtless possesses, he trusts will also be treated with consideration.

In the preparation of this work the writer has been guided by school, town, county and state records, Mr. Butterworth's History of Dane County, Wisconsin Historical Collections, newspaper files, and among pioneers besides those whose reminiscences are contained in the volume, Messrs. Philander Nash, Isaac D. Spears, William R. Spears, Jno. Jones, C. J. Lewis, Thos. Jones, J. T. Chandler, G. Gullickson, M. C. Webber, O. G. Stamn, Ole Osmonson, Eliphalet Thomas, Mrs. G. Tollefson, N. N. Byrge. Special thanks are due W. W. Patchin for kindness and interest shown.

A. B.

# THE STORY OF PRIMROSE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ORGANIZATION OF TOWN—NAMING OF THE TOWN—SONG OF PRIMROSE HILL.

When the gold fever was at its height in California, when Ireland was drooping under her great potato famine and Europe was trembling from center to circumference at the great French and Hungarian revolutions, another historical occurrence of no little significance was consummated in the little city of Madison, Wisconsin. The nature of this act we gather from the laws of the State for the year 1849:

line out

Chap. 120 of the Acts and Resolves passed by the Legislature of Wisconsin, 1849.

AN ACT to organize the Towns of Primrose and Perry in Dane County.

*The people of Wisconsin, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:*

SEC. 1. Township No. five north, of range No. seven east, in Dane Co., is hereby set off from the town of Montrose and organized into a separate town of the name of Primrose, and the first town meeting shall be held at the school house of said town, on the first Tuesday in April next.

SEC. 2. Township No. five north, of range No. six east in Dane Co., is hereby set off from the town of Montrose and organized as a separate town by the name of Perry



and attached to the said town of Primrose for all town purposes.

SEC. 3. This act shall take effect on the first Tuesday of April next.

HARRISON C. HOBART,  
*Speaker of the Assembly.*

J. E. HOLMES,  
*Lt.-Gov. and Pres't of the Senate.*

Approved March 21, 1849.

NELSON DEWEY,  
*Governor.*

The bill was registered Assembly Bill No. 85 and was introduced Feb. 7 by Hon. Ira W. Bird, now living at Jefferson, Wis., who represented the towns of Madison, Cross Plains, Clarkson (Roxbury and Dane), Springfield, Verona, Montrose, Oregon and Greenfield. It was entered on the proceedings of the house as "a petition of Robert Herrington and 19 other inhabitants of Town 5 Range 7, Dane County, for a separate township." The bill was referred to the committee on towns, of which Hon. S. H. Roys, a brilliant young *locofoco*, was chairman. On March 16 it was reported back from the senate and passed.

It was originally intended by the pioneers to have the town called Perry, in honor of the hero of Lake Erie, the settlers being chiefly Ohio people. But as the postoffice had received the name of Primrose the legislative committee thought it best not to name the town otherwise, so the name Perry was given to the western town.

The story of how the town originally received its name is interesting and possesses an element of the romantic. When in 1847 the postoffice was established at the house of Robert Spears, the question arose as to what it should be named. The chivalrous pioneers left the choice to the ladies. After some time Mrs. Spears suggested the name

“Primrose” from an old song in honor of a country lass that she had heard her father sing beginning:

“On Primrose Hill there lived a lass,”

Mrs. Chandler, however, thought “Primrose” too sweet a name and argued for “Hillsburgh.” A division of the house was called and the settlers decided that “Primrose” would not be “too sweet.”

The song from which the town took its name is supposed to have run somewhat in this wise:

On Primrose Hill there lived a lass,  
And aye a bonnie lass was she,  
Her charms so fair, none might surpass,  
And none withstand their witcherie.

And oft as tripped this lass abroad  
The flowers grew fairer round her feet,  
More freshly green seemed e'en the sod,  
The thrushes song more low and sweet.

By streamlet, grove, and ruin old,  
Young Harry wooed so ardently,  
And whispering cronies slyly told  
How Mary soon a bride should be.

Alas, for lovers' gentle hearts,  
That wars should rise to work them harm;  
From weeping Mary, Harry parts,  
His country's weal demands his arm.

The battle's last wild echo dies,  
The smoke slow rises from the plain,  
Young Harry, foremost, weltering lies,  
His bosom pierced, in deadly pain.

His anguished lips, all quivering pale,  
One latest prayer of love would frame,  
The feeble, faltering accents fail,  
And end in murmuring Mary's name.

Peace spreads her wing o'er camp and field,  
The cruel war full soon is past,  
But who sweet Mary's breast can shield?  
What art dispel the coming blast?

They brought young Harry's drooping clay,  
His broken mother's cot before,  
And thrice sweet Mary swooned away,  
And long the secret tear did pour.

She murmured not, nor hinted ill,  
But ere the year its course was flown,  
The lovely flower of Primrose Hill,  
Slept with her lover neath the stone.

So the beautiful name of Primrose was adopted, and it was indeed fitting that Mrs. Spears, the first woman in the town, should have the honor of giving it its name. Where the Primrose Hill of the song is is not known. The name occurs in other English ballads and a hill bearing that name lies to the south of London.

## CHAPTER II.

## FIRST VISIT TO TOWN—SURVEY—FIRST SETTLEMENT.

The first white man known to have set foot on Primrose soil was Eldred S. Hale, who is still a resident of the town. In 1829 the United States Government purchased from the Winnebago Indians all of Southwestern Wisconsin in order that mining might be carried on peace-



Robert A. Spears.



Betsey G. Spears.

First Settlers in Primrose.

fully, and in 1831 Mr. Hale, in company with his brother Washington, carried the last load of provisions and payment to them to Ft. Winnebago (Columbia county). They journeyed through Primrose over the Madison and Wiota road, then an Indian trail. Straggling hunters and prospectors may have visited the town previous to this time but no evidence of it has been found. After Ebenezer Brigham had established his smelting oven at Blue Mounds, much of the lead mineral from the Exeter mines was taken to the Mounds to be smelted. This was hauled by ox teams over the Blue Mounds and Exeter Ridge road which crossed the Madison and Wiota road just above the spring by K. Hustad's house, section 19. The proximity of this spring to the crossing of these roads



made it a popular camping place for emigrants and miners and lead Robert Spears to establish the first settlement and hotel there in 1844.

Major Wm. Deviese, of Montrose, an old Frenchman, born in the last century, used to relate an incident in his life connected with this camp ground that may bear repeating: "I set out from Exeter," he said, "early one winter's morning to walk to Brigham's, at Blue Mounds. I had expected to reach Brigham's about two o'clock, so I stuck only a piece of Johnny cake and a bit of bacon in my pocket. Soon after I started a most terrific blizzard set in which drifted my path full and otherwise impeded my progress. I floundered on, however, and was surprised when I reached the spring on the Madison and Wiota trail to find that it was night. My Johnny cake and bacon was long since gone and the nearest house was at Blue Mounds, nearly ten miles away. There was no alternative but to build a fire and lay down in the snow. Of course I didn't sleep any too soundly and I awoke early the next morning most tremendously hungry. In the burr oaks around me were roosting large flocks of prairie chickens, but I had no gun. Just as I was preparing to resume my march, I saw a hungry hawk swoop down on one of the birds and kill it. I rushed at him with my stick before he had time to carry it off and captured the bird from him. I roasted it in the fire that I had built and had a most excellent breakfast that morning."

The town was first surveyed into sections in 1833 by Jas. W. Stephenson. As this gentleman was of considerable importance in his day, a little further notice of him will be admissible.

Major James W. Stephenson was one of the prominent men of the Black Hawk war. He was a close personal friend of Gen. Henry, and with him, had been arraigned at Edwardsville, Ill., for a high misdemeanor but both



were acquitted. Previous to the Indian war he was in the employ of the Galena Mining Company. At the outbreak of hostilities he was commissioned captain. He found the bodies of Hale\* and his companions who had been killed May 23, and buried them, and on June 8, with a small band led out to reconnoitre, he fought a daring battle near Yellow Creek, on the Pecatonica.

In this battle he lost three men and was himself severely wounded. Three times, with his men, he charged a thicket in which the Indians were stationed and in which Black Hawk himself, was said to be hidden. Later, he was created major and, with eighty Galena men, joined Gen. Dodge at Deeve's old smelting works on Sugar River. In various capacities, he served to the end of the war, being at Fort Winnebago, Blue Mounds and the Bad Axe.

A point of interest in Mr. Stephenson's report of his survey of the town is the mention of an Indian village on the southern boundary line of section 36.

Robert Spears, the pioneer of pioneers, came to Primrose from Green county, Wisconsin, in the spring of 1844. There was no settlement within a half dozen miles at the time, though Robert Oliver, of Montrose, had two years previously entered some land in section 14. Mr. Spears entered a claim of 160 acres embracing the region of the spring on the present K. Hustad farm. Ten acres were broken and put under cultivation before the little log

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\*May 21, 1832, Felix St. Vrain, agent for the Sacs and Foxes at Rock Island, set out with six others to seek lands for settlement. On the way they found the dead body of one, Durley, and buried it. Seeing signs of hostility among the Indians, they debated returning on the night of the 22d. Three were for returning and four against, so they struck camp for the night. The next morning they were attacked near the present station of Polo, on the Illinois Central R. R., and St. Vrain, Hale, Fowler and Aaron Hawley were killed. Their companions, Aquilla Ford, McKinney and Alex Higinbotham, though hotly pursued, managed to escape and finally reached Galena. The murder of these men precipitated the Black Hawk war.—*Wis. Historical Collections.*

cabin, the first Primrose home, was built on the identical spot where K. Hustad's house now stands. In these labors Mr. Spears was assisted by his nephew Isaac D. Spears.

Mr. Spears came originally from Troy, Ohio. From the same region came his brothers William and Edmond Spears with their families about the same time, also Philander Nash, unmarried, and in 1845 Martin Nash and George Patchin with their families. Then, in 1847, came Joel Smith and David Thomas with their families. These families were all related in some direct or round-about way. In 1846 W. W., Stephen G., and E. S. Hale and Christian Hendrickson settled in the town, and about the same time or before came Robert Herrington and Wm. W. Day and Mr. and Mrs. John Craft, the latter settling in "Miller's Hollow." The other earliest pioneers among the Americans were Hall C. Chandler, William K. and Fred Underhill, John Jones, Joseph Phillips, George Schofield, Robert White, Joel Britts, Jacob and Samuel H. Nofsinger, Charles and Wilmot Marston, Mr. Ford, Martin L. Ashmore, William G. Dudley, Billings Lewis, the La Follette's, Josiah, William, Warren, Elhanon, Robert and Harvey; Freeman Fisher, Jonathan Prince.

Hall C. Chandler and brothers who followed later, came from Maine via the Great lakes. The Hales, Underhills, Jones, Hendricksons and several others came from the mining regions about Wiota, and the La Follette's, Britts and Nofsingers from Indiana. Concerning some of these pioneer families we let their representatives speak elsewhere. Of these original settlers Mr. E. S. Hale is alone still a resident.

As nearly as can be ascertained these earliest comers settled or entered present farms in some part as follows: Sec. 5, W. W. Hale, E. W. La Follette respectively, on H. Johnson and J. Lingard farms; sec. 6, Edmond Spears, W. G. Dudley, S. H. Nofsinger, Martin L.

Ashmore on Kolve, T. Swanson, Edseth, and Mrs. G. Halvorson farms; sec. 7, Billings Lewis, Jacob B. Beckner, on A. Severson and M. Kerwin farms; sec. 8, Wm. Spears, Jacob B. Nofsinger, Robert Herrington, Wilmot Marston, on O. B. Skuldt, Syver Skuldt and Baker farms; sec. 9, Joseph Phillips on G. Gullickson farm; sec. 15, H. C. Chandler on O. L. Myrland farm; sec. 17, Mr. Ford on Ole O. Lee farm; sec. 18, Geo. Patchin on C. Engeland farm; sec. 19, R. Spears on K. Hustad farm; sec. 20, Geo. Schofield, Underhill brothers, David Thomas on Hefty and Durst farms.

Brief sketches of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Spears with supplementary history is given elsewhere in this volume by their son, J. Anderson Spears. They were of sterling New England stock well fitted for the building of a new country. Mrs. Spears is described as being especially amiable and intelligent. A brother, Philander Nash, writes: "I remember her as a girl in school that she generally spelled all others down. Her disposition was most mild and no one stood higher in people's estimation. At an early age she embraced religion, uniting with the Methodist church, and she lived her whole life a Christian above reproach."

The privations of their first days in Primrose were indeed many. With scant means, far from any other cabin or village settlement, they bravely set to work to rear a home. Several small children had to be provided for. What added to their burdens was the necessity of keeping over night emigrants and others who passed by and of which there were many. Then, in 1847, came the cares of the postoffice. Mrs. Maria Norris, their daughter, writes:

"When my parents settled in Primrose they had no intention of keeping tavern, but they were forced to keep people as there was no other settlement near. The traveled road was on a ridge near by and teamsters in



passing would see our cabin down in the hollow and come down, and solicit lodging. Father did not like to charge anything for this as he had no conveniences, but they always pressed him to, saying it would not do otherwise. Sometimes they would stop as early as four o'clock in the afternoon; at other times they would arrive long after dark. Many a time was father obliged to get up at night, take his lantern and guide some traveler down who had left his team upon the ridge, and mother must get up to prepare supper, often for a house full of guests. Father and mother thus had plenty of company and were helped along financially somewhat, but it was hard work for mother as she had besides this care to do her own washing and to spin, weave and make clothes for the family. Mother used to get very homesick and downhearted at times, thinking of her childhood home in Ohio and she away off in a wilderness. I was but a little girl at the time, but I remember her breaking into tears on receiving letters from her playmates and family. The only other woman in the settlement for a time was Mrs. John Craft, who lived in 'Miller's Hollow.' "

Numberless teamsters from the lead mines passed along the ridges at the time *en route* for Milwaukee and other points, and regularly quartered over night with Mr. and Mrs. Spears. This demand for accommodation caused Mr. Spears, in 1846, to erect a barn, the first frame building in the town and which still stands. The siding used in this barn was hauled in one great load from Sauk county by pioneer John Jones. The little log cabin was also added to and made double. In short, the cabin became known along the route as the "Spears Tavern," ranking with the "York Prairie House" further on. While liquor was sold at all other taverns in those days, be it said to the credit of Mr. and Mrs. Spears, they never dispensed any, although a sure profit would have followed.

Among the many travelers that stopped regularly at

this tavern may be mentioned the mail carriers, Joe Pain and Mr. Eaton; Mr. Ludlow, of Monroe, then a peddler; Mr. Ryder of Blue Mounds; J. I. Case, a fanning machine agent; J. and Ed. Shook; "Tom" Haney, of Blue Mounds; Peter Parkinson, of Fayette; J. Miller, and Capt. James Biggs, of La Fayette county. It is interesting to note that in later years Prof. John B. Parkinson, of Madison, while on his way to and from the State University and his home in La Fayette county, frequently stopped at this same tavern, and likewise the three Bashford brothers, from the same region, and that still later the world renowned Ole Bull, while once passing through the town, stopped and took a draught from its historic spring.



Christian Hendrickson.

The First Norwegian Settler.

In 1846, Christian Hendrickson, of Lier, Norway, settled in Primrose on the farm now owned by his son James, being thus the first Scandinavian settler in the town. In 1848, Nils Skogen settled on the Henry Samson farm, Salve Jorgenson on the George Bowers farm and Neils Einarson on the Jonas Osmondson farm. In 1849, came Gunof Tollefson, G. Danielson, Ole Danielson, Ole Tollefson, Peter P. Haslerud, Ole Anderson and Laif Olson, and soon many other Norwegians, among them Kittel Moland, Mons Ness, Kundt Bowerson, Lars Holverson, G. Stamn, Niels Olson, Paul Charleson, Elling Stamn, Knudt and Jens Olson, Ole Skuldt, L. L. Kolve and Mrs. Jackson and sons, Gunnel and George. During the years 1853-5 they came in still greater numbers.

Owing to their greater poverty and helplessness, the sacrifices and privations suffered by these sturdy pioneers were even greater than those of their American brethren, and their story was the common story of the Norwegian pioneer. But they were bound to succeed.



Poor in everything but indomitable energy, they came here to rear homes and become good citizens and no obstacle was too great to be overcome. Thus Mr. and Mrs. Mons Ness, the first Norse family in the Sugar River Valley, began with a yoke of oxen, a wagon and a cow, and Mr. Ness was obliged to cut saw logs at once to exchange for necessities. Their little cabin was floorless for a time and raised from the ground, so their few sheep crawled under the logs and quartered with them. The sufferings of the Tollefson family were even greater. Mr. Tollefson's parents left their native place in Norway on foot with their six children and only one hundred and eighty dollars. Transportation to Havre, France, cost forty-eight dollars, and they landed in New York with barely one dollar, and yet Mr. Tollefson's father was the richest Norseman in the party. Fortunately free transportation was given them to Milwaukee and the winter was spent in Norway, Racine county. In the early spring young Gunof started west and by splitting six hundred rails was furnished a team to bring his people to Jefferson Prairie. Here a claim was made and lost and the family then journeyed to Beaver Creek, Boone County, Ill., where the old couple died of typhoid fever. By working out six years young Gunof saved three hundred dollars, and by Mexican soldiers' warrants was able to buy his farm in Primrose. When, in 1850, he married Julia Gunhus, both were penniless but by hiring out during the summer they earned a team, wagon and a few tools and began life on the Primrose homestead. Mr. Hendrickson came to America in 1842, and worked four years in the lead mines at Wiotia to pay his passage from Norway; and when he settled in Primrose he had but a yoke of oxen, a wagon, a cow and seventy-five cents capital. He was, however welcomed by the settlers who turned out and helped him build his cabin.

## CHAPTER III.

## PIONEER COMINGS AND GLIMPSES OF PIONEER LIFE — PIONEER RECOLLECTIONS.

The main phases of pioneer life are familiar enough and we will give but a passing glimpse or two.

On the general subject "Pioneering" we quote the following from the able pen of W. W. Patchin.

"It happens in every community, new or old, that some fail in the general attempt to obtain homes or amass property, either through shiftlessness, lack of ability or unfavorable circumstances that cannot be remedied. And thus it happens that in the older settlements of the east many people act on Horace Greeley's advice, 'Go west, young man.' Among such people some are so fond of change and adventure that the thought of going west or any where else gives them little trouble of mind. Indeed they are more uncomfortable if compelled to stay too long in one place. But on the part of most people, especially the real pioneer, it required genuine courage to break away from the old homestead, the old neighborhood, and every spot hallowed by early associations, and launch into the unknown 'far west.'

"If a married man, the pioneer probably pondered this matter of going west some time before broaching it to his wife. He might think, 'I have promised to love and cherish her. She should be protected rather than exposed to suffering, etc.' He might wonder if she could win the consent of her heart to leave the dear mother, perhaps never again to see her.

"And this question of going west doubtless engrossed his thoughts by day and was his dream by night for weeks and months before the final decision. And after the die

was cast, the Rubicon of this final decision passed, then the parting, the going, the long journey, with all its incidents, its hardships, its novelties, its strange sights; all these, would be the subject of his thoughts and conversation until the day of departure. And so for a time life would be a medley of sad and joyous feelings alternating. There would be the consciousness of the pain of approaching separation, perhaps forever, and the happy anticipation and hope of a home in 'the far land.'

"While it required courage on the part of anyone making such a great undertaking, it required greater strength and heroism on the part of the pioneer wife than on that of the husband, for she must rise superior to her tenderer, greater love of home, friends, family, mother, in making the great sacrifice. All honor to the brave pioneers and especially to their heroic wives who endured so much to lay the foundations for the structure of society we to-day enjoy."

Commenting on pioneer methods of farming Mr. Patchin says:

"Of course we cut all our grain at first with heavy cradles and bound it by hand. Oxen were first used to tread out the grain. A hard, smooth, circular track would be prepared on the dry ground. Two rows of bundles would then be laid down, top to top, on this. Then the oxen would be hitched to sweeps fastened at the center and driven around until the grain was treading out. The straw would then be forked away, the grain, chaff and dirt gathered up and the process would be repeated. The grain was later cleaned by being tossed up in the strong wind. Later treadal threshing machines appeared, built for two horses. Then came the most curious of all machines of its kind—the old traveling threshing machine. The cylinder of this machine was given its motion by the ground wheels and in order to thresh it was first necessary to heap on a load of bundles. Two yoke of

oxen were hitched on and the machine moved round about the field, leaving its trail of straw behind until a second loading was necessary. The first machine of this kind introduced into Primrose was brought in in the 40's by Stephen G. Hale, who in 1850 sold a half interest in it to J. W. Scoville, of Montrose, for \$87.

"The first threshing I saw in Primrose was done by horses treading out the grain by traveling in a circle upon it. This mode of threshing was resorted to as often as necessity demanded a 'grist.' And, by the way, the grist had to be taken a long way to mill. My father took his to Winnesheik (Attica), though I believe the Badger Mill was then running, but unbridged streams intervened. As I said, the grain was cut almost wholly with the cradle. Some men could rake up and bind what another man could cradle. David Thomas was an exceptionally good binder. I followed a cradle, but usually as Peter followed his Lord,—a good way off. I believe the first threshing machine employed by father was a two-horse tread power machine which left the grain and chaff upon the ground. This necessitated fanning mills. Every farmer had one after a while, but as a rule borrowed his neighbor's.

"Horse teams were less common than ox teams because oxen were better adapted to the work of breaking the sod, their 'gearing' being more simple, and especially because their keeping in summer cost nothing more than the trouble of turning them loose in the evening and gathering them up in the morning. At noon they fed in the yoke. Sometimes professional breakers would appear with an immense breaking plow drawn by upwards of seven yoke of oxen, and which turned under all stumps and underbrush save the very largest. At times the plow would become so firmly wedged in a stump that the 'leaders' would be taken back and hitched on to draw it out. At night they turned their oxen loose and lay out herding them. Were any of the animals considered too



wild they would be yoked together by twos, before turning out. In the morning the man bringing them in would usually be as thoroughly soaked with dew as if dipped in a stream." These professional "breakers" were also oxen breakers, securing the services of the oxen a season to pay for breaking them. The breaking was an easy matter. Hitched to an enormous plow in the center of a string of well trained fellows, there was but one thing the poor brutes could do,—go ahead.

One pleasant feature of pioneer life was the fraternal disposition of the settlers. This was shown especially in the matter of cabin building. On this point Mr. Patchin writes:

"Cabin buildings were usually most jolly seasons. The settlers welcomed the new arrival by helping him build his cabin and were glad of an opportunity to get together and help each other. In building, four good men, skilled with axes, stood on the growing building, rising log by log, one at each corner, to flatten and fit each his end of the log. During and after the raising there was generally considerable fun in one way or another, and afterward a 'lunch' if circumstances were at all favorable. When in 1846, the pioneers of the southern part of the town turned out to help Mr. Christ Hendrickson, the first Norwegian settler, build his cabin, so many of them suffered from the fever and ague that they could hardly raise the logs, but at dinner Hollis Crocker, of Montrose, found occasion to remark: 'Boys, there's no trouble with your lifting now.' But one day was required for the building of a cabin."

#### I. PIONEER RECOLLECTIONS—BY W. W. PATCHIN.

My father, George Patchin, was born in Connecticut, August 6, 1806; my mother, Sophronia Nash Patchin, in Massachusetts, October 24, 1811. They were married in Ohio, in December, 1831, and in 1845 they came to Prim-



rose with their family, traveling the entire distance in a lumber wagon. In the spring of 1846, they settled in the town of Springdale close by the "Big Spring" above Mt. Vernon, my father's being the first cabin in that valley, the Hale brothers building one about the same time further down. Father soon exchanged this place for that of Philander Nash's in Primrose, afterward owned by Josiah LaFollette.

My pioneer privations began in earnest at the age of 14, when I was made "mail boy" and obliged to carry the mail on horseback between Madison and Wiota. The country was wild at the time, the distance between houses being in one case seven miles.

As we lived nearly equally distant from each of the limits we had to go to Madison to get the mail on one day, take it on to Wiota and back the next, and on the third take it back to Madison. Thus I rode on three successive days of each week, 44, 56 and 44 miles. At first I was well enough pleased, but the novelty soon wore off. The days grew shorter and colder and the pleasure gave way to dislike and finally to real dread. I rode on horseback, had nothing but leather boots for my feet and iron stirrups to put them in, so that I froze them several times. In the February following my father sold the contract and I was relieved.

I might relate many interesting experiences in this connection which, my being but a boy at the time, made a distinct impression upon me. I was frequently compelled to be out late at night, and on one cold evening returning from Madison, I stopped at Mr. Flick's, at Verona Corners, to warm myself, and falling asleep was persuaded to remain overnight. I would often doze in the saddle; prairie chickens would scare my horse so that I would nearly fall off, and at night I would watch the bushes for dreadful things to spring at me. One evening returning from Wiota, about two miles past Capt. Jaines Biggs' place

some hogs skulking in the grass frightened my horse so that he threw me and left me behind. I started for Green's Prairie about three miles away; I inquired for my horse there, but he not having been seen, I set out across the prairie for the home of William Spears, reaching there about 11 o'clock. The next morning I met my father and a neighbor hunting me up. The horse was found feeding at the roadside, having stepped over the rein with his hind foot.

I carried a little spending money on my trips for emergencies, and one day finding a pair of buffalo overshoes at Wiota I bought them, expecting a scolding on returning home. In this respect, however, I was happily disappointed. These overshoes were perhaps the first introduced into Primrose, and my father was thoroughly reconciled after testing their comfort.

As illustrative of small business, the postmaster at Madison would deduct a little from our quarterly pay if I failed to be "on time" with the mail.

At that time there were about a dozen pine trees, some of them over a foot in diameter, growing on the Mt. Vernon bluff, and were a beautiful sight. The Mt. Vernon saw mill, the first in that section, was built by George Britts in 1852, just between the present grist mill and the road. Mr. Britts, received the most of his help and his timbers from the farmers of Primrose.

My mother, Mrs. Sophronia Patchin, died after a lingering illness of dropsy of the chest, Jan. 27, 1851. Her remains were buried on my fathers farm, a short distance north of the old log school house, but were later removed to Evansville, Wis. A large circle of mourners were present at the funeral, besides father and five children were her two brothers and two sisters and their families. The funeral sermon was by Rev. J. E. Davis from Job 14:14: "If a man die shall he live again: All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

Hymns were sung, "Asleep in Jesus" and "Dearest mother, thou hast left us."

A WOLF KILLED.\*

As early as 1844, a wolf was killed near the house of Robert Spears by Philander Nash. Early one morning Mr. Nash and Mrs. Spears heard the poultry making a great noise and looking out they saw a wolf near the hen house. Mrs. Spears handed her brother a gun from her bedroom, and he opened the door slightly and fired. The wolf jumped forward and fell, but soon got up and ran away, leaving a trail of blood. His front leg had been broken near the shoulder. Mr. Nash went to Miller's Hollow, a mile southeast, and got Bob White and his two dogs. The dogs were put on the trail and in five minutes brought the wolf back. He ran around the house several times, attempting to get in, but the door was kept shut. After fighting the dogs awhile, he started off again but soon came back and crawled into a clump of willows, when Mr. Nash took an axe and killed it.

Among the early settlers there was almost entire respect for the "claims" of others. They still belonged to the government and any man mean enough could pre-empt one or pay the full price and the land was his. I recall only one instance of this dishonesty. Mr. Ford pre-empted the claim of his son-in-law, Wilmot Marston. For this Ford was given a frightful mauling one night by unknown ruffians, presumably the Marstons. But the settlers became so indignant towards Marston for his treatment of Mr. Ford that a large number gathered one

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\* Wolves were extremely numerous and troublesome to the farmers of Primrose until within the last twenty years. Liberal bounties have brought about their complete destruction. The number killed since that date are given: 1875, by John Schwartz, 5; 1877, Moses E. Burns, of Exeter, killed 19 in the towns of Primrose and Oregon; 1879, Moses E. Burns, 9; 1882, N. N. Byrge, 1; 1884, George Hendrickson, 8; 1885, N. S. Randall, 7 cubs caught in Perry and killed at Chairman Baker's house; 1887, N. S. Randall, 5; 1888, N. S. Randall, 6; 1891, Andrew Herth, 1; 1893, N. S. Randall, 7.



evening at the Marston house, without notice to the family, to try to persuade Mr. Marston to make amends. Whether they succeeded or not I do not now recall but the two incidents served to deter others from lawlessness.

Concerning this gathering, Mr. Philander Nash says: "I was surprised to see so many men together. I could not imagine where they all came from. They looked a resolute set, and some of them must have come a great distance." After this occurrence, Eliphalet and Franklin Thomas and I pooled our wits and composed a long doggerel song, set to the tune of 'Old Dan Tucker,' celebrating the event, which passed the rounds of the neighborhood. I recall but one stanza:

"It was over a hill and in a hollow,  
An old man lived,—now mark what follows,  
He did pre-empt his son-in-law's claim,  
And the son-in-law said he'd mar his brain."

CHORUS.

"So get out of the county you heartless wretches,  
You stole his money tho' you left his breeches," etc.

Thus we divided the honor of the laureateship with Mr. Underhill.

Concerning the first charivari, Mr. Patchin writes:

"One of the first persons to die in the town after our arrival was Mrs. Joel Smith. Mr. Smith lived just across the road from our place. In due time Mr. Smith was again married, and as the Thomas boys had known him, when living in Ohio, to have been an enthusiastic leader to give newly married couples a "horning," we decided to let Joel try for once to see how it would be to be made the object of fun himself. So we took guns, tin pans and cow bells and went to enliven the night around his house. Bang! bang! bang! three guns, and then the pans and bells! and then—we ran—more frightened really for fear of being caught, than Joel and sweetheart. But the joke came in when I found that I had left my powder horn behind. I knew that Joel would find it in the morning if



I left it, and would recognize it at once, so I got up very early and recovered it."

Our early Primrose life was, on the whole, most enjoyable. Friendliness and hearty good will characterized society generally. People made no display in attending church. Religious worship was simple and sincere, people were not ashamed to come to church in wagons or on sleds drawn by oxen. In fact, this was the common mode of travel unless by foot. It has been said that if one would enjoy life thoroughly, he should always be on the frontier, and I believe there is, on the whole more of human kindness and sympathy and hence enjoyment among pioneers than is found in older and richer communities.

## II—BY ASHLEY C. THOMAS.

David Thomas was born in Stafford, Vermont, September 24, 1800. He removed to New York when a boy, and in 1826 married Miss Clarissa Bliss, of Victor, Ontario county, New York. In 1834 they removed to Geauga county, Ohio, and in the summer of 1847, with their eight children, came to Primrose, Wis. Father located on section 20. He acted as chairman of the town board for a year, and as justice of the peace off and on until about the year 1860. While filling this latter office he joined in marriage three couples, D. H. Eastman and wife, Joseph A. Britts and wife, and a Norwegian couple whose names I have forgotten. Father died in Primrose in 1871.

The first school house in Primrose was a log cabin built by the settlers of the Spears settlement in the spring of 1848, and the first term of school was taught by Miss Martha De Corso, of Utica, Wis. The house stood in the edge of a grove and was used as a school house until about 1857, after which Ole Osmonson used it as a stable. When we first came to Primrose there were but two Norwegians in the town, Christian Hendrickson and his sister Mrs. Greenwood.

Religious services in those days were held in the log school house and the farm houses, and were well attended. An incident of one comes to mind. We were seated one Sunday afternoon at service when an adder dropped from the ceiling and fell into Eunice Corbin's lap. She jumped up with a light scream and dumped it out on the floor, whence it slid through a knot hole and escaped. At another service, the enthusiastic preacher turned his eyes full upon me and said impressively: "The serpent is always near thee, brother." I was sitting against the wall at the time and happened to glance around, when I saw an adder on the log right behind me. I beckoned to Mr. Holden, who was near, and he arose and with a knife severed its head from its body.

When we arrived in Primrose, we lived with Robert Spears until we could build. The settlement then consisted of Robert Spears and family, Geo. Patchin and family, Mr. Phillips and his two sons, Daniel and John, Edmond and Wm. Spears and their families, Samuel Nofsinger and family, Mr. Schoville and family and son-in-law, Wm. Underhill, Billings Lewis and family, Robert Herrington and family and Jacob Nofsinger and Jacob Beckner, single men. George Patchin and family lived on the La Follette farm, in a double log cabin which stood where the present frame house stands.

Mrs. Joel Smith was the first person in the town to die after we arrived. Her remains were buried in the hill north of the old log school house (Rock Hill, ed.).

The first winter after our arrival there was plenty of game. We often saw as many as thirty or forty deer in a drove. My brother Frank and I once came upon a small drove and I shot one. Frank wanted to shoot one too but I made him wait until I had loaded again when they were gone. At another time, on a New Years' Day, Frank and I and Wallace Patchin, while out hunting deer, saw some animals go into a hollow stub about 12 feet high,

We stopped up their hole and went home. The next day was Sunday but our fathers, Deacons Patchin and Thomas, and we boys, went back to the stub, thinking we had trapped bear. Frank and Wallace took home a neighbor's dog that we had borrowed and the rest of us went on. Becoming tired of waiting for them, we cut into the roots of the stub and took out our game, which proved to be "coon." There were five and we killed them before the other boys returned. In the meantime they had shot a deer, so on the whole we had good luck, but the two deacons came near being "churched" for breaking the Sabbath, and Wallace Patchin writes: "Three boys were in danger of violating the scriptural injunction: 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,' for we had had the solemn, Sabbath promise from the other boys and the deacons that they would not pitch into the fun until we got around."

A party of Indians were once encamped in our neighborhood in the early years and made themselves obnoxious to the settlers by stealing potatoes, chickens, etc. A committee was appointed to notify them that they would have to leave the country. They asked how many men would come to drive them off and were told "twenty," "hump" they replied "we no go for twenty." On the day appointed the settlers armed themselves and sought their camp but the enemy had disappeared, so that in a way they did not "go for twenty."

Some Indians once came to the cabin of "Billy" Underhill (on the old Thomas farm), "Billy" was not in and his young wife being greatly frightened crawled under the bed and would not come out though they entreated her to do so. At length "Billy" arrived on the scene. They told him his "squaw was pretty but she wouldn't come out."

Wolves were numerous and ravenous. Farmers in going out to do their chores in the morning would often



find that the snow around their log stables had been beaten into hard paths during the night by these animals trying to get at the sheep within. A young man named Luther Green claimed to have had a lively race for life with them one night, and exhibited sundry cuts in his coat made by a knife with which he defended himself. The most celebrated hunters of the early days were Jacob B. Beckner of Primrose, "Tom" Bentley of Springdale and John B. Brown of Perry.

One winter there was great excitement in our region over "mad dogs," a young man named Fairbanks had a hand to hand fight with one. He had no weapon but succeeded in keeping it off by vigorous kicking. One dog came by our house and was seen to froth at the mouth and to have fits. The alarm was given and my brothers Eliphalet and George came from the field and, after following the animal nearly a mile, killed it with a shot gun.

Despite the fraternal disposition of the settlers which made life so pleasant, there were occasional exhibitions of ill will. One in particular I remember. A family named Marston lived in the Spears settlement. (Baker farm ed.) It was rumored that they were familiar with ways that were dark. A little old man known as "Old Ford" had put up a cabin rather too close by to suit the Marstons, (on the present Ole O. Lee farm — ed.) perhaps with the intention of jumping their claim. Be that as it may, one dark night the old man's cabin was torn down over his head and he was taken from his bed by unknown ruffians and dragged through the bushes and briars and left in a most forlorn state. It is needless to say that he did not rebuild his cabin nor press his claims to the land.

Shortly after this occurrence a sensational article concerning the Britts family appeared in the New York Ledger. It was reported that a gas cave had been discovered near Mt. Vernon and that while certain members of the Britts family were exploring it the gas caught fire from



the pipe of one of them and the cave and the whole party was blown up. The idea of the hoax originated with some enemies of the Britts' and as no such cave was known to the early settlers, the Britts' were simply blown up on paper.

In those days our mode of farming was necessarily very primitive. The grain was harrowed in with a wooden toothed harrow, a single shoveled plow, usually manufactured by some blacksmith, was used for cultivating the corn, wheat was at first threshed out with a "traveling separator" which received its motion from one of the wheels and threshed while on the road, stopping to take on sheaves when necessary.

Some of the farmers built their own wagons, wheels being made by sawing off a "cut" from some oak log, each "cut" making one wheel. These wagons were known among the Norwegians as "Kubberulles." They were clumsy affairs and made either night or day hideous with their doleful music.

At first all grain was marketed in Milwaukee. Mr. Patchin, Hall Chandler, and father hauled many a load of wheat there, and received from forty to fifty cents a bushel for it. Two weeks were sometimes required for a trip, as they would often have to unload several times while on the way. While on the journey they camped out wherever night overtook them, sleeping under their wagons with their muskets handy. Mr. Patchin, Andrew Nash and many others also hauled a great deal of lead from the mining regions to Milwaukee, camping out in like manner. The greater part of the wheat was sold at Ludington's old warehouse in Milwaukee. In 1850 a market was established at Moscow, Wis., and wheat bought there at fifty cents per bushel.

## III—BY J. A. SPEARS.

Robert A. Spears, son of a Revolutionary soldier, was born in Canada, July 24, 1814. Served a time in Co. H, 8th Wis. Inf., during the war. Died Feb. 10, 1867. Buried at Belleville, Wis. Betsey Gould Spears (Nash), his wife, was born in Massachusetts, Dec. 10, 1814. Died Jan. 8, 1883. Grandmother Spears and her family and Grandfather Nash and his family moved to Geauga county, Ohio, where my parents met and were married April 11, 1838. Two children were born to them in Ohio, when in the fall of 1842, they set out for Wisconsin, with a horse team and a covered wagon. Their son, J. A. Spears, the writer, was but six weeks old when they started on their perilous and tedious trip. They had a hard time getting through and I was once taken so sick that they had to lay over for a week on the road. Father brought with him his mother and his brother William's wife, William following soon afterward. The first year my parents settled in Monroe, Green county, Wis., and farmed it, when they moved to Green's Prairie and spent another year. In the spring of 1844, father took a pre-emption claim of 160 acres near the spring in Primrose, and built a log house. Their privations there can be better imagined than described, so I will not touch on them to any extent. On December 23, 1848, was born a brother, Perry N. Spears. He died in infancy, October 15, 1850. There were ten children in our family, eight born in Wisconsin.

Wheat was the staple on which the farmers depended and father hauled many a load to Milwaukee, often not getting enough to pay expenses, as the journey required from nine to twelve days. To help defray expenses he would make it a point to load back with goods for merchants. Just as father was beginning to see daylight ahead and the road began to look smooth, I burned up his stable and 300 bushels of wheat, father just getting

his horses out in time to save them. Some of us children were playing with fire and it got the start of us. At another time my sister saved my life from an angry sow who had downed me for stealing one of her pigs. It was a most fearful fright to me.

Indians, bears and wolves were very troublesome. Father was often obliged to get up in the night to drive the wolves from his pig pen. Indians were not dangerous but they camped around, begged, stole ears of corn for their ponies and dug up seed potatoes. Uncle William once gave \$10 to some of them for a pony for his son and the third night it was missing and was never seen again.

Our luxuries were few. We had plenty of venison, and father kept a great many bees, but luxuries like salt herring and store molasses were indeed rare. Our clothing was home spun, of flax and wool, but we thought it fine enough. For the young folks there were plenty of dances from one cabin to another after a time, and on the Fourth of July the neighbors would often meet and some one would read the Declaration of Independence and make appropriate remarks while the young people would amuse themselves picnicking.

#### IV — BY ELDRED S. HALE.

I was born in the state of Tennessee in 1816, and came to Primrose in December, 1845.

My father was drawn to the lead regions of northern Illinois and was killed by the Indians there in the Black Hawk War of 1832. I served in Fort Wiota as a guard of the women and children during that war. The year before this (1831), I made a wagon trip with my brother "Wash" from Wiota to Fort Winnebago. We went over the present road leading from Mount Vernon to Postville, which was then only an Indian trail, and carried with us a load of goods for the Indians and their last payment for their lands. We camped out wherever night overtook us,



propping up our wagon pole with a stick and throwing a canvas over it for a tent. We came back around Lake Mendota at Madison, the region being then, of course, a wilderness. Madison then contained only one building, a small double log cabin occupied by a Frenchman and his Winnebago wife. In one end of his cabin, the Frenchman sold whisky to the Indians, gradually diluting it with water as they became more and more oblivious until finally he sold them *pure water* which passed all right.

I brought the first span of horses to Primrose I believe. We had no roads in those days, of course, but we got along any way, all we needed was an ax to cut our way through the woods and a spade for cutting down the embankments of the streams in crossing.

Wood and water determined cabin locations. The rivalry for rails was very strong as there was not then a quarter of the present amount of woods. Destructive prairie fires would sweep over the country. Game, especially of the smaller kind, was exceedingly plentiful, so much so that I have seen small knolls covered with rabbits and other small game during the progress of a prairie fire. Roving bands of Indians were quite numerous at first but they gave but little trouble. Our land was obtained at \$1.25 per acre. We had to go to the land office at Mineral Point to get our deeds. The early settlers usually walked there and came back the next or the third day. When I came here, there were but three or four settlers in the town, the Spears brothers, Geo. Patchin, Robt. Herrington and Jos. Phillips, I think. They were strung along the "Spears Valley" as we called it; Robt. Spears living on the present Knudt Hustad farm and his brother William on the present Ole Skuldt farm. The first school house in the town was built in the ravine, just between the present house and barn of Ole Osmundson. I helped to draw the logs for the same. The first marriage in the town was that of "Billy" Underhill and Miss Scofield, of Montrose.



The next, that I remember, was that of Robert Herrington and Phoebe Phillips, and as I helped to bring this one about I will tell you what I remember of it. Phoebe was a daughter of Joseph Phillips and had already been married to a cousin named Phillips. For some misdemeanor this husband had disappeared or had landed in some penitentiary and Phoebe, having obtained a divorce wished to marry Herrington. The father objected to their scheme but was, as usual, outgeneraled by the young folks. One morning, in the winter of 1847, I started for Wiota with a load of corn, and coming by Herrington's, who lived on the present Baker farm, he stopped me and asked me if I could take him and Phoebe out to Squire Wheeler's, who lived in a log cabin upon a small hill near the present asylum in Verona. They wished to get married and as I had the only horse team in town he wished I would. I told him I thought I could when I returned and was accordingly told to hurry back and keep "mum" to Old Phillips. I was detained three or four days, however, but when I returned, I rigged out a little sleigh that my brother and I had built for running around in, and with this I finally brought them to their destination.

The Indians all knew us Hale brothers and were afraid of us as they knew we hated them for killing our father. Once in the early days, my brother "Wash" saw an Indian chasing a deer over the hill past my cabin here. He took down his rifle and went out to meet him, but the Indian was afraid and fled back westwards. "Wash" followed him until he reached their camp on the Barton farm. He walked right into the camp with his rifle on his shoulder and told the Indians they must "puccagee" (get out). They feared us and in a day or two were gone.

V—BY MARY L. PARKINSON (THOMAS).

We append a most interesting letter from the pen of Miss Thomas (now Mrs. Parkinson) descriptive of the

country school of that day and of the old-fashioned spelling school.

My first school in District No. 2 was held in a log cabin on Mr. Britts' farm and was arranged as it best could be for the accommodation of perhaps fifteen pupils. Seats in those days consisted of long plank benches ranged around the room, not very convenient nor comfortable, as some of the little fellows could testify to who had to occupy them, sitting with their feet dangling about half way to the floor. No wonder their little minds were not in a receptive mood at all times. The desks were nearly as primitive as the seats, consisting of slanting boards, fastened to the wall, not very convenient for exercises in penmanship, as the pupil had to turn around in order to get to the portion of desk allotted him. We had no black boards nor any of the helps and conveniences found in the pleasant school rooms of to-day.

In our early days in Primrose, spelling schools were the delights of young folks. Large crowds would flock to them on the bright winter nights. In the spelling school proper the usual mode of procedure was for two "captains" to cast lots to see who should have the first choice. The best spellers were usually chosen first, but sometimes if the "captain" had a sweet-heart in the crowd she would be chosen first through courtesy. One person was appointed to mark all the words missed on both sides. If one side missed a word and it came back to their side and was spelled correctly it was saved. After spelling in this way about an hour they would stand up to "spell down." One rule observed was that if one side missed a word and the other spelled it, the best speller on the losing side would be chosen to go over on the winning side, so that sometimes one "captain" would be left standing alone. Another method was to have the one that missed sit down and the contest then became exciting as the number standing diminished. Finally the last hero or

heroine of one side would go down and the contest was over. This ended, an intermission would follow which gave an opportunity for pleasant conversation and for the boys to get permission to see safely home the girls of their choice.

The second part of the session was consumed in "speaking pieces," holding dialogues, and enacting tableaux. The orations of our country's master minds would be strikingly reproduced at times and comic and pathetic renditions would be interspersed.

Sometimes a blood-curdling tragedy would be played. one in particular was a favorite, in which an old Peruvian was dragged in, examined, questioned and finally cut down with a sword or shot dead on the spot and then dragged out. Such numbers served to keep up the excitement of the evening, Then the scene would change and an old man, bent with care and tottering under his weight of years, would enter. Clad in the garb of poverty, he presented a most pitiable spectacle as in a husky, trembling voice he would pray:

"Pity the sorrows of a poor old man,  
Whose trembling limbs have borne him to your door,  
Whose days are dwindled to their shortest span,  
O give relief and heaven will bless your store."

Then the going home! Here a jolly sleigh load jingling along; there a happy loitering couple; here a merry party setting out on foot across the bright, white hills; and, lastly, the sedate old folks and the teacher bringing up the rear. No one who has ever experienced them can forget those happy winter nights with the hills and forests ringing with the songs, the shouts, and the responses of the parting friends.

Well, the old spelling school is a thing of the past but its joys and memories still survive.



## VI — BY JOSEPH A. BRITTS.

Mr Joel Britts was the most extensive farmer of Primrose in his day, owning the present Konle and Lewis Rue farms. Young men out of employment could always turn to him for work. An interesting letter from his son Joseph A. Britts follows.

My father, Joel Britts, was born July 5, 1806, in Bottonot county, Va. He grew up there and, at the age of twenty-four married Saloma Nofsinger. In 1836 he moved to Montgomery county, Indiana. He lived there until the spring of 1848, when he moved with his family to Primrose, Wisconsin. It was on the 22nd day of May, 1848, that we came to a halt where the village of Mt. Vernon now stands. Father had come out to Primrose in 1847 and had taken up two hundred acres of land which included the present site of Mt. Vernon and had left money with uncle Jacob B. Nofsinger to pay for building a house. When we arrived in the following May the house was not completed and we stopped the first night with Uncle and and the next day moved to another uncle's, Sam Nofsinger's place, just above our old Primrose home. Soon after father bought the claim of Ed. Spears, sec. 8 (the present Konle farm, ed.) and we commenced the building of a larger house.

Now my pioneer days began in earnest. Owing to so much other work as breaking, putting up hay, etc., our house was left unfinished and when we awoke on the morning of November 1, 1848, we found it snowing heavily from the north-east. Ten inches of snow had fallen and it fell every other day for a month. We had the deepest snow that winter that I have ever seen. Deer and wolves were equally plentiful at the beginning of that winter, but at the end it was all wolves and no deer. The wolves being able to run on the crust of the snow killed off the deer. The same winter father hired a young man named



John T. Berger to survey his land, and it was a good season for such work as we could walk on the crust but a sharp stick was needed going up or down hill.

Mr. Berger was a Pennsylvania German and still lives at Philadelphia.

In the summer and fall of 1850, we built a log school house in our district. Wallace Patchin was my first teacher. Soon after school began father spoke of going to Madison and I put in to go along. I wanted to see the little town that was the capital of the state. Father did not like the idea of my staying out of school, and also said if I went I would have to put up a load of oats to sell as he had no money to pay hotel bills. I put up the oats and we set out. I was then thirteen years old and how well do I remember that ride! I remember how Josiah Matts, then living in a log cabin near Verona Corners, came out as we passed, smiling all over and after the handshaking and mutual inquiries of health, said he had had "a streak of luck." He had been down to Badger Mills a few days before with a grist and the miller had told him if he would bring him a load of such wheat he would pay him the Milwaukee price for it. "So yesterday," he said "I took down a load and got forty-five cents a bushel and I have the money right here," he added, slapping his pocket.

Well, we got to Madison that day and sold the oats to Tibbetts & Gordon for twelve and one-half cents per bushel. I carried them up stairs into a barn, then up a foot ladder and emptied them into a bin. I looked all over the little city of Madison and then went home to school.

The gas cave story concerning our family was concocted by "Steve" Niles and "Jim" Dudley, a pair of mischievous slinks. No, father never climbed "Devil's Chimney" but in 1850 he and Ephriam La Follette climbed the high rock on the McCord farm near the big spring above Mt. Vernon.

In 1855, a family named Hoyt came out from the state of New York and settled on the Byam farm just above ours (the present Lewis Rue farm, ed.) and soon one after another went down with typhoid fever until all but the father were prostrated. The mother and a ten year old son died and we buried them on a knoll just across the creek north-east of our house. A little brother of mine was also buried there. A lilac bush marks their graves.

Primrose was an excellent stock and grain country in those early days. We raised some splendid horses, cattle and hogs and, though we had to cut our hay with a scythe and cradle our grain, we often put up one hundred tons of fine timothy and clover, and grain accordingly. Our society was better than I have ever known it since in a farming community, we had good common schools, as well as singing and spelling schools. We had a fine class of young people and I look back on my pioneer days in Primrose as the happiest of my life. I always had to work hard and knew something of privations but that only fitted me the better for after life, especially for the war, in which I and two younger brothers served for three years. Father died in 1876, mother in 1880. Father was a miller and followed the milling business up to the time he moved to Wisconsin. He was a man of good judgment, was methodical in his business and strictly honest in his dealings with his fellow men.

#### VII — BY GUNOF TOLLEFSON.

From Knud Langeland's work "*Nordmaendene i Amerika*," we quote the following in regard to the coming of the Tollefson family to Wisconsin:

"When they arrived at New York, a man named Bakke gave them a passport to Milwaukee where they arrived in due season. This city was then on the outskirts of civilization and there were few Norwegians in Wisconsin, Tollefson and his family in company with Lars Domme-

rud went to Muskego, where they met, among other countrymen, Even Heg, Reimert and Soren Bakke. Shortly afterward, he went further west and worked for one Sherwood who lived near Clinton in Rock county. Tollefson says:

“I split six hundred rails in order that I might borrow Sherwood’s wagon and yoke of oxen with which to bring my parents to Rock county. Being unused to driving oxen and being desirous of meeting my parents as soon as possible, I drove the animals too hard, and it was not long before they became tired and lay down and I was unable to move them. In this difficulty, I gave them some ears of corn and after a while they got up and walked forward after me. This happened oftener, and, at last, whenever the animals wanted corn they simply laid down, and before they received it they would not stir from the spot. I then conceived the idea of hanging a couple of ears of corn on my back and by walking before them induce them to travel. In this way I made some progress and finally reached my parents. On the home journey, we traveled more leisurely. I have often thought that Sherwood showed me an unusual kindness and confidence in thus letting a newcomer and a stranger take his oxen for so long a journey and without knowing whether I could drive them or not.

Being desirous that I might own a piece of land as soon as possible, I went to Primrose in 1849. Here I met Niels Einarson. There was plenty of land to be had, but how to find the description of what I had chosen was the question. After considerable search, we found a large oak tree a short distance east of where Norman Randall lives; on this tree we could plainly see these letters and numbers: N. W.  $\frac{1}{4}$ , S. 23, T. 5, N. R. 7, E. There was neither pen nor paper to be had without traveling miles away and something had to be done immediately. I borrowed an axe of Einarson, cut down a little poplar tree, and hewing



a piece thin and smooth took my jackknife and cut in it the letters and numbers exactly as they were engraved on the tree. With this poplar board under my arm, I walked to the land office at Beloit and laid it down with the necessary money. The clerks were greatly amused at my novel description and one of them cried: "Ha! Ha! Ha! boys, come down and see this Norwegian's description."

They understood it, however, and I obtained the land.

Among other reminiscences Mr. Tollefson says:

"When I first came here, the large oak trees in front of my house were so small that we used to spread our washing upon them to dry. Deer could be seen to graze in large flocks around our doors. Indians were numerous and a picturesque Indian village stood on the knoll between the Colby Cheese Factory and the river. The Blue Mounds ridge road was traveled to considerable extent even then, and, wishing to meet our countrymen who might pass along upon it, Knudt Bowerson and I cut a path to it through the woods and nailed on a tree, a board with this inscription: "Vil nogen mode med Norskere saa kom ned her." (If anyone wishes to meet with Norwegians, come down this way.) By this means many emigrants from our old fatherland were brought to us, among them old Bor Borson. When I came here the land was nearly all held by Mexican soldier warrants. I was the first to pay tax in money in the town. I could not raise the required six dollars in three towns and was afraid my land would be sold. While in this quandary I met Hall Chandler one morning and he said to me: "Gunof, have you paid your taxes yet?" "No," said I. "Well," he replied, "I tell you what: You have two pigs, I have none. I have two wolf scalps over home. Give me one pig for them and you can get your money." I jumped at the chance, took the scalps and walked to Madison the next day, where I obtained the bounty and paid my tax.



“When I came back, I saw a man cutting down trees on my land and I approached him to form his acquaintance. ‘Hello! how are you?’ said he. ‘Have you bought this land?’ ‘I have,’ said I. ‘All right,’ said he, ‘these logs are yours then. I supposed this was government timber, but if you have bought the land they are yours. I’d rather have a good neighbor than all the logs.’ That was my first meeting with Hall Chandler. Two years later when I returned to take possession, the four logs were still lying where cut.

“Like most pioneers, we stole all our timber for rails and buildings from the government lands. But we had to haul it away as soon as cut as anyone could claim it. Hall Chandler would set out in the morning with his oxen and split 50 rails till noon, loading them on as he split them, and repeat it in the afternoon. We fenced only our fields and meadows in those days, pasturing in common, and the early records of the town are filled with notices of estrays.

“I was the second man to buy land in Primrose, Robert Oliver, of Montrose, having previously bought eighty acres of the present O. Hanna farm. Salve Jorgenson offered me his claim of 160 acres for \$20. He had broken four acres also, and had built a cabin 10x12 feet square, thatched with brush and sods, but I preferred the farm I bought.

“Before the coming of Elling Eielson to Primrose some of the Norwegians were distressed to see their children grow up long-haired and unbaptised. How to get them baptised was the question. Finally, in 1850, Rev. J. W. Dietrichson, of Koshkonong, offered to meet the farmers at Thore Spaanem’s home, in Springdale, if they would raise \$10 for him. By hard canvassing, the \$10 was raised and the farmers hitched up their oxen and took their precious hopefuls to Springdale and had them baptised. I think John Hendrickson and Ole Tollefson were among those baptised.”

## CHAPTER IV.

## EARLY BIRTHS — DEATHS — MARRIAGES — UNDERHILL - SCOFIELD WEDDING.

The first white child born in Primrose was David, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Patchin, whose birth occurred November 22, 1845. Other early births were: Perry N., son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Spears, born December 23, 1848, George, son of Mr. and Mrs. Billings Lewis, 1849. The first child born to Norwegian parents was John Hendrickson son of the first Norwegian couple in the town.

The first of the pioneers to die was Mrs. Joel Smith who passed away within half a year after coming to Primrose, dying in March, 1848, doubtless from the privations endured in the long overland journey from Ohio. Her remains were buried on the farm near the site of the present Rock Hill Cheese Factory, nearly all the settlers turning out to this first sad funeral service. Other early deaths were Perry N. Spears, Oct. 15, 1850; Mrs. George Patchin, Jan. 27, 1851; Mrs. Joseph Phillips, 1851; "Grandmother" Spears, a Revolutionary widow, died at a great age in 1852. Mrs. Phillips' remains were buried in the town of Montrose a short distance east of "Devil's Chimney." A burial ground, the first in the town, was early prepared just west of the site of the present Rock Hill Cheese Factory, and thither the pioneers took their first sad pilgrimages with their dead. Coffins were made at home from the black walnut trees of the forest and the graves were unmarked by monuments, flowers alone testifying of love and remembrance.

As the early settlers moved away, the soil these dead had civilized was not allowed the peaceful mingling of their bones and the remains were generally transferred

by relatives to other cemeteries. The walnut coffins on being exhumed were often found in a good state of preservation. A most astonishing find was made in 1866, when digging into the grave of "Grandmother" Spears, for the purpose of transferring her remains to Moscow, Wisconsin, the body was found to have petrified. In the removal, the head was broken from the body. Two graves still remain untouched. They are to be seen under the wire fence by the road-side, but, neglected and unmarked, will soon be obliterated and forgotten like those of the dusky Indians before them.

#### THE FIRST WEDDING.

The first marriage to take place on Primrose soil was that of Wm. K. Underhill to Miss Mary Scofield, by "Squire" Nathaniel Wheeler, of Badger Prairie, Verona, Dec. 23, 1846. The wedding was celebrated at the little cabin of the groom's brother, Fred Underhill, a mile east of Robert Spears' home.

William K. Underhill and his brother Fred came to Primrose from Philadelphia, where Fred had just married Elizabeth, a sister of Mary Scofield. William Underhill was a man of some education and was the poet of the settlement, writing many songs for occasions and being always ready to sing or play the violin. Miss Scofield was but 14 years of age at the time of her marriage and is described as "a very handsome and pleasant girl," an opinion shared by the Indians as Mr. Ashley C. Thomas tells in his reminiscences. Nearly all the settlers of the town turned out to make merry this first glad occasion of its kind in the settlement. The ceremony was performed in the afternoon of a bright winter's day. A supper followed, bountiful as the scant means of the day afforded, at which venison and vegetables, grouse and johnnycake were pressed upon the merryguests. No dancing was indulged in owing to lack of room but throughout

the night the young folks held high carnival playing games while the genial bridgroom sang his jolliest songs or convulsed the company with witty tales. Contrary to the traditional custom at backwoods weddings the officiating squire was not paid in butter or sausages made by the bride's own fair hands, but in cold cash.

The next marriage in which both parties were from Primrose was that of Robert Herrington and Mrs. Phoebe Phillips, who were married by the same officer at his home in Verona. An interesting account of the event is given by Mr. E. S. Hale in his recollections. Other early marriages were: Philander Nash, Caroline L. Miles, December 15, 1846, at Verona; Jacob B. Beckner, Mrs. Betsey Craft, December 13, 1847, by George Patchin; Wm. W. Day, Lucy Prince, February 23, 1848, by George Patchin; Jacob B. Nofsinger, Polly Ann Spears, March 11, 1848, by George Patchin; Stephen G. Hale, Mary D. Wright, January 25, 1849, by A. Ogden, Madison; E. S. Hale, Mary Jones, May 27, 1849, by J. B. Waterbury, Verona; Daniel Phillips, Alvina Nash, September 11, 1849, by George Patchin, Springdale; Joel Smith, Mrs. ——— Kelley, ——— 1849, at Attica, Wisconsin; B. F. Thomas, Jane R. Spears, September 12, 1853, by J. E. Davis, Primrose.

The first Norwegian couple married in the town was Jens Olson and Kari Skarhaug, who were married in 1851 by Mr. Gabriel Bjornson. Three years earlier, Nils N. Skogen had married Ellen ——— at Clinton, Rock county, Wisconsin, after he had settled in Primrose.



## CHAPTER V.

## FIRST TOWN MEETINGS—TOWN BOARDS—CLUB LAW RESOLUTION AND RESULT—LIST OF TOWN OFFICERS.

Among the earliest records found bearing on the town is a justices' docket kept by George Patchin who had been elected justice of the peace while the town was still a part of Montrose. The docket covers the years 1847-8. Several petty actions are recorded, chiefly in regard to debts and horse trading. The first entry is Oct. 15, 1847 and relates to a horse trading suit between Elisha Carver and William K. Underhill.

When the first town meeting was held, Tuesday, April 3, 1849, the clerks and inspectors of election were sworn before Mr. Patchin. This historic first town meeting was held in the little log school house that had just been built and the poll list appended below shows who were present.

Poll book of the first annual election held in the town of Primrose, Dane county, Wisconsin, 3d day of April, 1849. Voters names: Joseph Phillips, Robert Spears, Jonathan Prince, Stephen G. Hale, George Patchin, Charles Marston, Joel Smith, William Spears, William W. Day, John B. Brown, Jacob B. Nofsinger, Daniel Phillips, Eliphalet Thomas, Freeman Fisher, Martin L. Ashmore, Robert Herrington, David Thomas, John Jones, Eldred. S. Hale, Billings Lewis, Samuel H. Nofsinger, H. C. Chandler, Henry Vanderbilt, Jacob Beckner, Joel Britts.

The result of the first election was to give an office to almost each man. We submit a copy of the original records.

## TALLY BOOK—VOTES RECEIVED.

For supervisors: David Thomas, chairman.....	22
Samuel Nofsinger.....	22
Freeman Fisher.....	23

For Clerk: Robert Herrington.....	19
For Assessor: H. C. Chandler.....	19
For Collector and Treasurer: Billings Lewis.....	22
For Superintendent of Schools: Joel Britts.....	23
For Justices of the Peace: David Thomas.....	21
B. F. Denson.....	22
George Patchin .....	15
Jonathan Prince.....	20
M. Ashmore .....	7
For Constables: Joel Smith.....	22
J. B. Brown .....	23
J. B. Nofsinger .....	15
W. W. Day .....	4
For Overseer of Roads: Robert Spears.....	12

We the undersigned clerks of the board of electors hereby certify that the foregoing is correct.

ROBERT HERRINGTON,  
JOEL BRITTS,  
DAVID THOMAS.

*Clerks.*

This 3d day of April, 1849.

The honor of being the first office holder in the town after its organization, doubtless belongs to Robert Herrington, who on April 11, was sworn in as town clerk before Justice George Patchin. On the same day, Treasurer Billings Lewis and Constable Joel Smith were also sworn, in before Mr. Herrington. The officers elected were sworn, some before Justice Patchin, and some before Mr. Herrington, in the following order: April 13, David Thomas, chairman; Hall C. Chandler, assessor; April 14, Freeman Fisher.

It would appear, however, that office-holding did not exercise that singular fascination over those sturdy pioneers that it does over their successors, for on the 7th day of May the following petition, signed by twelve voters, was laid before the town clerk:

*To the Clerk of Primrose:*

We, whose names are hereunto affixed being duly qualified voters in said town, do request you to notify a special town meeting for the purpose of filling vacancies which have been made by non-acceptance of office. Also to see if the town will vote to raise money to defray the charges and expenses arising in the town, and all other business necessary to be done.

In obedience to this petition, a special election was called, and on May 29 thirteen voters appeared at the school house and voted as follows:

For supervisor, J. B. Nofsinger received 13 votes.

For school superintendent, Joel Britts received 12 votes.

For justice of the peace B. F. Denson received 5 votes.

For constables, Wilmot Marston received 8 votes and J. B. Brown 5 votes.

For sealer of weights and measures, Joel Britts received 4 votes.

Of these officers John B. Brown was sworn in on the same day; Wilmot Marston on June 4, and Jacob B. Nofsinger and Joel Britts on June 6.

The next election was held September 3, of the same year, when twelve voters assembled to vote for a county judge. Three candidates were voted for, John Catlin receiving two votes, Joseph Prentiss two, and Julius T. Clark eight.

If the argument that the exercise of suffrage is conducive to intelligence and good citizenship, then the pioneers of Primrose certainly had a rare opportunity for benefiting themselves, for on the 6th of November we again find them at the polls, holding now the fourth election in the first year of the town's history. As this was for the election of state officers, we might expect a full attendance, and such we find to be the case. The twenty-five voters entered on the poll list for the first election,

were all present save two. A partial result of this election follows:

TALLY BOOK — VOTES RECEIVED.

For Governor: Alexander L. Collins .....	9
Nelson Dewey .....	13

*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
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For equal suffrage to colored persons, Yes 8; No 9.

DAVID THOMAS, *Chairman*,

FREEMAN FISHER,

JOSEPH PHILLIPS.

*Inspectors.*

ROBERT HERRINGTON,

CHARLES MARSTON,

*Clerks.*

November 6, 1849.

The political complexion of the town at the time may be gathered from the result. On the question of granting equal suffrage to colored persons which was then submitted to the people there appears to have been some indifference and less pronounced views.

The expenses of the town for the year 1849 were \$63.00, of which Robert Herrington received \$12.25 for services as town clerk, and Joel Britts, as town superintendent, \$13. Ten dollars were voted for town expenses and ten for schools. The chief work done by the first town board was the laying out of a road, June 27, 1849, from the southwest corner of the town to the northeast corner. J. T. Berger acted as surveyor. Other surveyors of the early days, to digress a moment, were Hall C. Chandler, James Edi and G. W. Reilly.

The laying out of roads was the chief work of the town boards for the first dozen years. Roads were chiefly established by pioneer usage before they were legalized. As one old settler says "wherever a spring was found, there a cabin was built and the location of the cabins determined



largely the first roads." One of the first established was the road running northward past the Town Hall to Mt. Vernon, another, the one running east and west between sections sixteen and seventeen from Chandler's to Josiah La Follette's. October 6, 1851, a road was established from the Blue Mounds and Monroe road to the Madison and Wiota road, running between sections five and eight. The greater number of these early roads have been re-laid and changed at various times.

At the second town meeting (1850) Joseph Phillips was elected chairman of the board of supervisors.

One of the most important things done at this second town meeting was the passing of the following resolution:

*Resolved*, That we, whose names are hereunto affixed, do agree to protect each and every citizen in his claim and residence who will pay the sum of \$5.00 on each quarter section so claimed, and in proportion to the value or amount of claims on smaller parcels, which shall be paid on the subscription of such claimant for the purpose of aiding to pay the taxes assessed on resident citizens' land to defray the town expenses; and, further, that we do not agree to protect any man's claim who refuses to comply with the foregoing.

Joel Britts,  
 Jos. Phillips,  
 M. L. Ashmore,  
 Benj. F. Denson,  
 S. H. Nofsinger,  
 Lars Holverson,  
 Robt. Spears,  
 Stephen G. Hale,  
 Edmond Spears,  
 Nils Olson,  
 H. C. Chandler,  
 Wm. Spears,  
 Jos. Vandike,

B. Lewis,  
 Jacob B. Beckner,  
 Robt. Herrington,  
 David Thomas,  
 John Jones,  
 George Patchin,  
 Anon Jorgen,  
 Christian Hendrickson.  
 Reuben Selby,  
 Dan'l Phillips,  
 Eldred Hale,  
 Charles Marston.

It appears that some of the settlers were in danger of losing their lands through claim jumpers, and hence the fraternal bond was signed. The resolution became noted in the early town's history as the "Club Law."

It was soon demonstrated that this action on the part of the settlers was a wise one. Early the next year, 1851, they were unexpectedly called upon to deal with a case which for a time threatened to create open warfare with a neighboring town.

Albert Bowker, of Montrose, had cut down some logs on Widow Jackson's farm, at present owned by H. Hoesly. Knowing that a gang of men would come to haul them away, the Primrosians determined to forestall them, and, in obedience to the "club law," they spread the "message of war" and rallied at night. They elected Nils Olson, who lived on S. Ellingson's farm, as captain, and set out before daylight to be on hand in good season. Early as they were, however, they found the Montrosians there ahead of them with one large log already loaded which they were hauling away. Capt. Olson stepped up before the Montrose team and raising his axe above his head yelled, "Whoa!" He then shouted to Mr. Gunof Tollefson: "Gunof, drive up along side there with your sleigh." Tollefson obeyed, and the log was promptly shifted from the Montrose to the Primrose sleigh. The captain of the Montrose forces blustered, and to show his defiance began cutting at the root of a large tree. The Primrose captain, who was a monster in size and a man not to be "bluffed," then sprang forward and began cutting at the tree over his small opponent's head saying, tantalizingly, "I will cut over your head and you can have the stump." Being a foreigner, perhaps Olson did not speak very plainly. At any rate, the Montrose captain retreated, charging Olson with having threatened to cut off his head, saying: "I'll have him in Madison in the morning." The Primrose men then hauled the logs into a pile and

soon had the pleasure of seeing the would-be depredators go home empty handed.

The town officers since 1849, as nearly as can be ascertained from the records, are given below.

1850 — Joseph Phillips, chairman, John Jones, Edmond Spears; Robert Herrington, clerk; Billings Lewis, treasurer; Hall C. Chandler, assessor; Joel Britts, T. superintendent; Billings Lewis, S. H. Nofsinger, constables; Joel Britts, sealer wts. and m.

1851 — H. C. Chandler, chairman, Peter Peterson, S. H. Nofsinger; Jos. Phillips, clerk; Benj. F. Denson, assessor; Billings Lewis, treasurer; Joel Britts, T. S. and sealer; Lars Holverson and S. G. Hale, road overseers.

1852 — H. C. Chandler, chairman, Peter Peterson, S. H. Nofsinger; J. La Follette, clerk; B. Lewis, treasurer; H. C. Chandler, assessor; W. G. Dudley, T. S.; Joel Britts, sealer; Lemuel Green, Jos. Phillips, justices.

1853 — Josephus Chandler, chairman, A. Sanderson, B. Lewis; J. La Follette, clerk and assessor; Norman Randall, treasurer; W. G. Dudley, T. S.; Ben. F. Thomas, constable; David Thomas, justice.

1854 — Josephus Chandler, chairman, Billings Lewis, David Thomas; F. F. Abbott, clerk; N. Randall, treasurer; J. La Follette, assessor; W. G. Dudley, T. sup't.

1855 — Josiah La Follette, chairman, G. Tollefson, Jos. Phillips; H. M. La Follette, clerk, resigns and W. G. Dudley appointed; Gunnel Jackson, treasurer; N. Randall, assessor; Chas. A. Judd and Peter Bell, justices; Billings Lewis, T. sup't.

1856 — John L. Lewis, chairman, N. Randall, B. Lewis; H. M. La Follette, clerk, resigns and H. A. Smith appointed; Jos. A. Bell, treasurer; N. Randall, Thomas D. Francis, T. S.

1857 — Josephus Chandler, chairman, Freeman Ash, Thos. Nelson; H. A. Smith, clerk; G. Tollefson, treasurer; Joel Britts, T. S.

1858 — Norman Randall, chairman, Freeman Ash, Peter Bell; F. F. Abbott, clerk; G. Tollefson, treasurer; D. H. Eastman, T. S.

1859 — G. Tollefson, chairman, on resignation of H. M. La Follette; H. A. Smith, clerk; W. C. B. Weltzin, treasurer; B. S. Jain, T. S.

1860 — H. M. La Follette, chairman, G. Tollefson; H. A. Smith, clerk; W. C. B. Weltzin, treasurer; Benjamin Jain, T. S.; David Thomas and Peter Bell, justices.

1861 — Moses Chandler, chairman, Thos. Nelson, C. F. Weltzin; F. F. Abbot, clerk; W. C. B. Weltzin, treasurer; N. Randall, assessor; Geo. W. Reilly, T. S.

1862 — D. H. Eastman, chairman, C. F. Weltzin, G. Tollefson; F. F. Abbot, clerk; W. C. B. Weltzin, treasurer; K. Bowerson, assessor; G. W. Reilly and Thos. Newton, justices.

1863 — Moses Chandler, chairman, Thos. Newton, G. Tollefson; W. C. B. Weltzin, treasurer; K. Bowerson, assessor; Randolph Fairbank and Freeman Ash, justices.

1864 — N. Randall, chairman, Thos. Newton, G. Tollefson; W. C. B. Weltzin, clerk; C. F. Weltzin, treasurer.

1865 — Moses Chandler, chairman, Thomas Newton, G. Tollefson; W. C. B. Weltzin, clerk; C. F. Weltzin, treasurer; K. Bowers, assessor.

1866 — George Fulton, chairman, Christ. Hendrickson, Thomas Chantland; S. Holland, clerk; O. S. Holland, treasurer; C. J. Weltzin, assessor.

1867 — George Fulton, chairman, Christ. Hendrickson, Thomas Chantland; S. Holland, clerk; O. S. Holland, treasurer; C. J. Weltzin, assessor.

1868 — George Fulton, chairman, G. G. Hanna, Christ. Hendrickson; S. Holland, clerk; G. Tollefson, treasurer; K. Bowers, assessor.

1869 — S. Holland, chairman, Eli Peterson, G. G. Gunhus; G. G. Hanna, clerk; T. Thorstenson, treasurer; K. Bowers, assessor.



1870—S. Holland, chairman, G. G. Gunhus, John Hollar; W. C. B. Weltzin, clerk; N. N. Byrge, treasurer; K. Bowers, assessor.

1871—W. C. B. Weltzin, chairman, G. G. Gunhus, K. Peterson; Ole Barton, clerk; Wm. L. Hollar, treasurer; G. Tollefson, assessor.

1872—W. C. B. Weltzin, chairman, resigned and Chas. Dixon appointed, P. O. Baker, K. Peterson; Ole Barton, clerk; N. N. Byrge, treasurer; D. H. Eastman, assessor.

1873—Chas Dixon, chairman, P. O. Baker, T. Simonson; Ole Barton, clerk; N. N. Byrge, treasurer; D. H. Eastman, assessor.

1874—Eli Pederson, chairman, T. Simonson, H. H. Rindy; O. G. Stamn, clerk; Jno. Peters, treasurer; G. Tollefson, assessor.

1875—W. C. B. Weltzin, chairman, Ole Barton, P. O. Baker; O. G. Stamn, clerk; Ole Osmundson, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1876—W. C. B. Weltzin, chairman, Ole Barton, P. O. Baker; O. G. Stamn, clerk; J. G. Hanna, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1877—M. F. Van Norman, chairman, D. H. Eastman, P. O. Baker; Ole Barton, clerk; Ole Osmundson, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1878—M. F. Van Norman, chairman, D. H. Eastman, P. O. Baker; Ole Barton, clerk; Ole Osmundson, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1879—P. O. Baker, chairman, H. H. Rindy, D. H. Eastman; Ole Barton, clerk; Ole Osmundson, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1880—81—P. O. Baker, chairman, O. P. Myrland, N. O. Holman; Ole Barton, clerk; H. H. Rindy, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1882—P. O. Baker, chairman, O. P. Myrland, A. S. Holland; Ole Barton, clerk, H. H. Rindy, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1883—P. O. Baker, chairman, M. Hobbs, L. E. Lewis; Ole Barton, clerk; N. N. Byrge, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1884—Same as 1883 except, H. H. Rindy, assessor.

1885—P. O. Baker, chairman, M. Hobbs, O. E. Stamn; N. N. Byrge, clerk; G. G. Stamn, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1886—P. O. Baker, chairman; M. Hobbs, H. H. Rindy; N. N. Byrge, clerk; G. G. Stamn, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1887–88—P. O. Baker, chairman, O. E. Stamn, John Tascher; W. C. B. Weltzin, clerk; G. G. Stamn, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1889—Ole Barton chairman, O. E. Stamn, M. Hobbs; W. C. B. Weltzin, clerk; G. G. Stamn, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1890—Ole Barton, chairman, Chas. Danielson, M. Hobbs; W. C. B. Weltzin, clerk; Wm. Dahl, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1891—Ole Barton, chairman, C. Danielson, Chr. Engeland; W. C. B. Weltzin, clerk; Wm. Dahl, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1892—Ole O. Stamn, chairman, Chr. Engeland, John Tascher; W. C. B. Weltzin, clerk; Wm. Dahl, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1893—Ole E. Stamn, chairman, Chr. Engeland, M. Hobbs; W. C. B. Weltzin, clerk; Wm. Dahl, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor,

1894—Ole Barton, chairman, Gullik Anonson, C. Danielson; W. C. B. Weltzin, clerk; Wm. Dahl, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

1895—O. E. Stamn, chairman, G. Anonson, C. Danielson; Wm. Dahl, clerk; G. S. Engen, treasurer; Eli Pederson, assessor.

## CHAPTER VI.

PRIMROSE POST OFFICE — THE FIRST SCHOOL — BUILDING OF  
A SCHOOL HOUSE — FIRST TEACHERS.

The need of postal facilities was early felt by the pioneers and was remedied through the efforts of Robert Spears and George Patchin, by the creation of Primrose post office, April 29, 1847, with Robert Spears as the first postmaster, and his cabin home as the post office. It was this post office (as we have noticed), which later gave the name to the town. Although her husband was commissioned postmaster, it was Mrs. Spears' distinction to preside over the office and to distribute the mail to the expectant neighbors on their weekly gathering at the office. A mail route was established from Madison via Primrose, to Wiota (La Fayette County), a distance of fifty miles. Mr. George Patchin took the first contract for carrying the mail for \$160.00 per year, trips to be made weekly. He associated with him Mr. Fred Underhill who furnished a horse and its keeping while Mr. Patchin furnished the "mail boy" in the person of his son Wallace, then fourteen years old. Trips were made on horseback. About the same time a line was established between Blue Mounds and Monroe, on the Blue Mounds and Exeter Ridge road. Mr. Patchin was succeeded as mail carrier by "Joe" Pain and the latter by J. Eaton, a historic figure who served a long term. Changes in the postmastership have been many: Sept. 16, 1850, George Patchin became postmaster; June 21, 1851, Robert Spears again took charge; May 26, 1854, David Ash; May 11, 1865, Freeman Ash; May 24, 1867, William L. Hollar; Feb 13, 1868, John Hollar. On Nov. 22, 1870, Jacob G. Hanna was appointed postmaster and the office was removed to the center of

the town. Changes in the postmastership since are: Feb. 1, 1877, Annie G. Hanna; March 29, 1887, Lars Peterson; May 2, 1887, Ole Peterson; Dec. 19, 1889, William Dahl.

#### SCHOOL HISTORY.

The early pioneers of Primrose were not slow to appreciate the value and advantages of schools. In the fall of 1847 we find them in the woods cutting and hauling out logs for a school house. The building erected was a small one and stood about midway between the present residence and barn of Ole Osmonson. A grape vine now marks the exact site of the first temple of learning built on Primrose soil. Who the first teacher was is a matter on which the memory of the early settlers disagree. The honor appears to lie between Miss Martha De Corso of Utica, Wisconsin, and William K. Underhill, with the probabilities in favor of the former. No records have been found to settle the question.

In 1857, this building was given up as a school house and a new one of frame was built just back of the present Rock Hill Cheese Factory, the old one being stultified into a stable. In 1873 this second building was removed to its present site. Among those who have been employed as teachers of this school may be mentioned Mrs. R. G. Siebecker and Mrs. Florence Campbell Reed, the popular author of Madison. R. M. LaFollette was a pupil of this school as late as 1873.

On the organization of the town Mr. Joel Britts as superintendent of schools promptly set to work to redistrict the town and to urge the erection of new school houses, and soon four more cabins dedicated to education were in process of construction.

The districts as organized by him have, naturally, all undergone numerous transformations since.

On March 6, 1850, the following report of District No. 1 appeared: No. of pupils who have attended during year,



26. School taught three months by Nathan A. Munn. Wages paid (by special act) per month, \$13. Resident children of school age in District No. 1, Primrose, male, 18; female, 8.

GEORGE PATCHIN, *Clerk*.

On Sept. 1, 1850, reports were received by the town clerk from all the districts as follows:

Dist. No. 1, No. of pupils who have attended, 48. School taught six months, by N. A. Munn, at \$13.33; by Adora Doolittle, at \$6; money received from town superintendent (by special act), \$38.33; money raised by district, \$18.00; all paid for teachers wages. Log school house on state land, worth \$50.00; has no conveniences for pupils. Books used: McGuffey's Readers, Kirkland's, Grammars, Olney's Geography, Adam's and Smith's Arithmetic, Webster's Spellers.

District No. 2 — Pupils, male 16, female 6; No. who have attended, 20. School taught three months by Mary L. Thomas at \$5.00 per month. Days lost by absence, 586. Books used: McGuffey's Readers, Webster's Spellers. Log school house, not finished.

WM. G. DUDLEY, *Clerk*.

District No. 3 — Pupils, male, 8; female, 7. School taught three months by Almira M. Comstock at \$1.25 per week. School visited by board three times; by superintendent two times; by parents three times. Log house with stone chimney. Books used: Sander's Readers, Webster's Speller's.

JOS. PHILLIPS, *Clerk*.

District No. 4 — Pupils, male, 13; female, 14. No school taught this year. Money raised by free will of people, \$7.50. House of logs, hewed and raised and nothing more. Money all gone to house; site one acre.

G. JACKSON, *Clerk*.

District No. 5 — Pupils, male, 14; female, 13. No school this year.

JOHN COPSEY, *Clerk*.

At the same time Sarah E. Wildeman taught the first school in the town of Perry (District No. 6), at \$5.50 per month. It is interesting to notice with what solicitude her experiment on the minds of the young hopefuls of the Buffalo town was watched, as in her short term of three months, she was twice visited by the town superintendent, ten times by parents and ten times by the officers, an example to be commended to the parents of to-day who have the welfare of their children and of the public schools at heart.

What an interesting spectacle one of these early schools would be to our eyes to-day! The little log school house with its stone chimney and surrounded by the green walls of the forest; its desks and straight backed seats formed of split logs; what a contrast to the comforts of the country school house of to-day! And yet there is reason to believe that the attendance and scholarship in the earliest days was almost as high as the present, which is perhaps to be accounted for by the fact that the majority of the pioneers of Primrose were Americans and of an intelligent, public spirited class. In one respect, the schools of the present have an advantage—they have better teachers. In pioneer days the teachers were chosen promiscuously from among the young people of the neighborhood. Often the only test of one's qualifications to teach would be the signature of the applicant's name, around which the board would gather, in all gravity, and exchange weighty opinions, as to its proofs of ability. These teachers were paid one dollar a week and upwards, and usually had the pleasure of "boarding around." The patience that these early martyrs to the diffusion of knowledge possessed is shown in the case of the first teacher in District No. 2, whose wages (\$1.25 per week in 1849) had risen, in the same district, after ten years of toil and expectation to the handsome sum of \$14.00 per month, over 100 per cent.

Their proficiency can be judged from a report sent by one "school ma'm" to a parent, in which, traced in labored pothooks, she informs the father that his child has made good progress in "wrichting and spelling." Spelling was in fact the one branch cultivated with general avidity. Next to this came declamation,—and thanks to McGuffey's Readers, their spirited speeches of Webster and Clay, in favor of liberty and union, reproduced at the spelling schools, kindled the first sparks of patriotism in many a breast and brought many to the support of the old flag in the crisis of '61.

The first school in District No. 2 was a three months' summer term taught by Miss Mary L. Thomas, daughter of David Thomas, the first town chairman. The school was held in a small log cabin on the Lewis Rue farm, the site being marked by a few burr oaks just west of Mr. Rue's. Joel Britts had built this cabin for some purpose or other but had left it unfinished, and while the new school cabin was being built on the present school site, this one was improvised for temporary use. Miss Thomas' wages were \$1.25 per week. An interesting letter from her descriptive of the school is found elsewhere. Her school opened on May 27, 1850, and twenty pupils ranging in age from four to eighteen years crowded into the little cabin. The pupils were from the Britts, Dudley, Ashmore, and Jones families.

The next year a three months summer term was taught by Miss Almira Comstock, who taught for many years throughout the town.

William Wallace Patchin, son of George Patchin followed, teaching the first winter term in the new school house. Mr. Patchin was then nineteen years of age and had spent the summer of 1851 at school in Grass Lake Academy, Michigan, being thus the first Primrose youth to push on for a higher education than local means afforded. That this action was appreciated by his neighbors

is evidenced by his being paid the extravagant sum of \$12. per month and board, and by the presence of the first teacher, Mary L. Thomas, as a pupil under him. About the same time, Caroline E. Thomas, of Primrose, opened the first school in what was later known as the "Martin" District, Blue Mounds.

It may be interesting to trace the various steps in the building of a school house, and accordingly we include a few entries from the records of District No. 2, the only district that contains complete records from date of organization. The records though few, reveal much, and we let them speak for themselves.

We Joel Britts, William G. Dudley, clerk, John Jones, director, and M. L. Ashmore, treasurer, agree to build the school house in the northeast quarter of the southwest quarter section 6. Log house, 16x18 feet, hewed inside.

Primrose, Dec. 22, 1849.

Log subscription — Joel Britts, 10; John Jones, 4; Samuel H. Nofsinger, 4; Jacob Beckner, 6; M. L. Ashmore, 8. Total, 32.

The above is a list of logs to be delivered on the site of the district school house, each person whose name supersedes the number of logs to get one half such number 18 feet long and the other half 20 feet for district No. 2 in the town of Primrose. The price of the logs is 40 cents per log.

The above agreement and subscriptions were made at the house of Joel Britts, Dec. 22, 1849.

February 20th, 1851.

*To Samuel Nofsinger, a taxable inhabitant of District No. 2, in the Town of Primrose:*

You are hereby requested to notify every legal voter of said district to attend a meeting called for the purpose of changing the school house site, and for voting a tax on the taxable property of said district for building a school house, and also for fixing a time when said house



shall be finished or made sufficiently comfortable to accommodate a summer school. Meeting to be held at the house of William G. Dudley, on Saturday the first day of March next, at two o'clock P. M. By reading this notice in the hearing of each such voter, or in case of his absence from home, by leaving thereat a copy of this notice at least six days previous to the time appointed for said meeting.

Dated at Primrose the day above written.

Done by request of five legal voters of said district and signed by

WILLIAM G. DUDLEY,  
*District Clerk.*

The school house was built on the identical spot where the present one stands, but for a few years no provision was made to secure a deed to the site. By petition a special meeting was finally called, whose action we glean from the following:

March the 24th, 1853.

We, the undersigned legal voters of District No. 2, in the town of Primrose, do hereby request the clerk of said district to notify a special meeting of said district for the purpose of taking measures to obtain a title to the school house site agreed upon at a special meeting of said district held March 1st, 1851, and in case a title is not obtained to agree upon some other site upon which to build a school house, and also to take measures to obtain pay for building the house on the former site, and also to take measures to get the use of the district library.

*School District No. 2, Town of Primrose:*

I have examined the instrument of writing that you left with me and I find that a deed to the school house site described as you have described it will not be a sufficient deed, and as you, the subscribers of said instrument, majority of the district board, took the responsibility to meet and make out the said description without

notifying me, you had better finish up the business, as I am not willing to write out a deed that will not be a good one.

Signed by the minority of the district board.

April the 4th day, 1853.

WILLIAM G. DUDLEY,  
*District Clerk.*

Finally, on April 12, 1853, a deed was given by Joel Britts and Salomy Britts to one acre for the small sum of one dollar. The residents specified also that this site might be used as a public burial ground, but none availed themselves of its use. A few who died were buried on a knoll just across the creek from the present Konle residence.

One night in the spring of 1856, this cabin was burned to the ground. This, while attributed to a defective stove, was doubtless due to incendiarism, as many of the residents wanted a new school house built and no agreement could be reached. The burning of the old necessitated the building of a new one. On September 29, 1856, a meeting was held and it was voted to rebuild the school house on the same site. It was voted to erect a frame building 18x20 feet and 9 feet high, and a tax of \$250 was levied at once. The present school house was the result. While this building was in the process of construction (1857), Miss Mary L. Thomas taught a three month's school on the up-stairs floor of the present Konle granary.

The log school house in District No. 3 was one of the first four built, and stood in the ravine just east of the present residence of Martin Hobbs. Almira Comstock was the first teacher, teaching a three months' term in the summer of 1850, the report of which is elsewhere found. The schoolhouse being too small a new one was erected on the site of the present Town Hall.

This log school house was replaced in 1858 by the build-

ing at present known as the Town Hall, which was built by Josephus Chandler and others at a cost of \$400. Some of the lumber used was sawed at the Mt. Vernon Saw Mill. The first teacher was George Chandler, the last Lucretia Randall.

The location of the school house not being satisfactory, it was voted Oct. 17, 1868, "That, the school site be moved to the southeast corner of K. Johnson's land, sec. 16," and, on Nov. 16, 1868, at a special meeting, it was voted to raise \$400.00 for the building of a new stone school house. This school house now known as the "Hanna" School House was built the next summer by John Rea and the patrons of the district. In the meantime the old School house, (the Town Hall), was sold to the town for \$300.00. Mr. Ole Kolve taught the first term in the new building in the fall of 1869.

On the completion of this building the residents of the district realized that they had the best school house in the town and they accordingly showed their pride and jealousy by voting that the house should be used for no other than school purposes, and that non-resident pupils be not admitted to it. In the light of this action it is interesting to reflect that the building has since been thrown open for almost every conceivable use. Much of the most stirring part of the town's history has been enacted within its walls, for besides serving as an ordinary school house, it has witnessed religious services, spelling schools, singing schools, debates and caucuses, and has been the rendezvous of many organizations, among them the Primrose Farmers Club, the Anti Horse-thief Association and the Primrose Farmer's Cornet Band.

The first school house in District No. 4, was a log cabin, built in 1849, and stood a few rods back of the present building known as the Bower's School House. Gunnel Jackson was the first teacher, Julia Barron the second. This cabin was also used for religious services throughout

the early years of the town's history by the Methodist and Hauge societies, and many of the first Scandinavians to die were buried near by. An interesting occurrence was the marriage in this building of Rev. P. H. Rasmussen of Lisbon, Ill., and Miss Ragnhild Holland by Elling Eielson, in the spring of 1855. The present school house was built in 1865.

The first school in District No. 5, was taught by Miss Fairbanks at her father's cabin, which stood a short distance below the site of the Lutheran church which was destroyed by fire in 1873. The first school house was built in what is now the dooryard of Mr. K. B. Skuldt's residence. Miss Margaret Svensrud of Blue Mounds, now Mrs. George Paulsen, of Moscow, Wisconsin, was the first to teach within it. In 1873, was built the present school house. Miss Tilda Malone of Springdale, in later years, taught in the above district almost continuously for thirteen years.

The stone school in District No. 7, was the first in the district and the first stone school house in the town. It was built in 1854 by the Norwegians of the southern part of the town to be used for school and religious purposes. In later years it was popularly known as "The Brodahl Church," and many marriages and baptisms have been celebrated within it.

The last of the early school houses built was the log school house in what is now District No. 6. This was built in 1863 and did service for twenty-five years. In 1885 the present school house was built. Eliza Milam was the first teacher in the old and Libbie O'Connor the first in the new school house.



## CHAPTER VII.

CHURCHES AND RELIGION—AN EARLY BAPTISM—ELLING  
EIELSON—A METHODIST CHURCH.

The pioneers of Primrose were a devout, God-fearing class and leavened their hardships with the consolations of religion. It was not long after the settlement that religious activity was manifested. The first service was held at the house of Robert Spears and was conducted by Rae Watcher, a Methodist exhorter, who lived on Green's Prairie, Wisconsin. Services were afterward held at the houses of the other settlers, Mr. Watcher making regular trips, on foot, from his home, stopping over night with Mr. and Mrs. Spears.

About the time of the building of the new school house, 1847, a new incentive was given to religion in the person of D. W. Edwards, a young revivalist of the Free Will Baptist church, who made his appearance in the settlement. So eloquent was he that on one memorable Sabbath afternoon he led nearly the whole population of the town, from the new school house in which the service was held, to a pool in the small creek flowing near by, and Rev. J. E. Davis immersed a goodly number, Mr. Edwards not being yet ordained. Among those immersed were: W. W. Patchin, David Spears, Abigail Spears, Eliphalet Thomas, Franklin Thomas, and Mary, Caroline and Matilda Thomas. Shortly afterward Elhanon La Follette organized the first singing school in the town, drilling the young people in hymn singing, "and then," one of the girls of that day now writes, "we all seemed to live like brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, for nearly all the young people were converted and the elders renewed their diligence in serving the Lord." Among other early

preachers of the day, among the Americans, may be mentioned William G. Dudley, Baptist; Elder Jarius Eaton Davis, of Belleville, and David Day, who lived on the L. Rue farm, and preached the peculiar doctrines of the Campbellites.

Outside of the Norwegians, there have been no regular church organizations in Primrose.

In 1850 Elling Eielson appeared among the Norwegian settlers of Primrose and preached his first sermon to them at the home of Nils Olson. A congregation was soon organized, the first in the town, known as the Primrose Norse Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, with Eielson as its pastor. Among the first members of this congregation were Gunof Tollefson, Ole Tollefson, Halvor Erickson, Anon Gjorgenson, Torje Matson, Salve Jorgenson, Ole Danielson, Nils Olson, Thomas Pederson, Knud Bowerson. The organization joined the Norse Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America. Services were held in private houses, confirmations celebrated in the woods with logs rolled up for seats. In 1856 the first church in the town was built by this congregation on section 21. Five hundred dollars were subscribed for the erection of this little structure, the members minimizing expenses by turning out and hewing all the heavy timbers from the woods near by. Ole Netland and Thomas Newton were the architects.

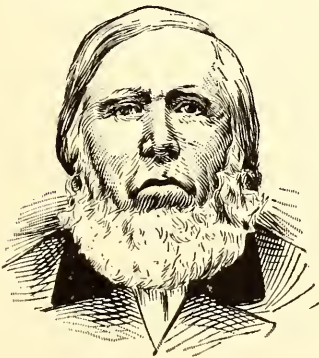
Immediately on its completion this church was honored by having the annual convention (Aarsmodet) of the church assembled within its walls, June 1, 1856. Delegates came from all surrounding states, boarding with the members of the congregation. The church being utterly too small to hold the great crowd that gathered, the business and discussions were carried on in the shade of the grove. This was a momentous meeting to the Lutheran church of the United States, and changed the course of its whole subsequent growth. Previous to this

meeting, Eielson and the Rev. P. A. Rasmussen, of Lisbon, Ill., had become involved in bitter disputes about doctrinal points and religious practices. All eyes turned anxiously to this meeting in the hope that reconciliation would follow. Such, however, was not to be the case. Violent discussions followed on predestination and other points and resulted in Rev. Mr. Rasmussen leading off one party, producing a schism never fully healed.

Elling Eielson was succeeded as pastor by Rev. Arne Boyum. Then for a short time Rev. L. Johnson and M. Samson served. In 1864, Rev. Ole E. Torgerson took charge, followed by Rev. P. O. Solberg, in 1866. In 1882, K. Hagaseth, the present pastor, was called.

In 1894 this first Primrose church, in which so many of the earliest marriages and baptisms in the town's history had been celebrated, was torn down and a new commodious building was erected by Kleven Bros., a few rods south, at a total cost of \$2,500.

The life of Elling Eielson, the first pastor of the church, reads like a romance and a short sketch will surely be of interest.



Elling Eielson.

Elling Eielson was born in Vos Bergen Stift, Norway, September 19, 1804. His father was a school teacher. At the time of Elling's birth, the spirit of the French rationalism of Voltaire and Rousseau had swept over Norway, coming by way of Germany and through Copenhagen, at which latter place all the theological students of Norway were then educated. Religion had died away to such an extent in Norway that we read that Christmas day would be given up to discussions from the pulpit of such material questions as the proper methods of agriculture. When Hans Nielson Hauge came forward with his wonderful zeal and eloquence to win the people back to



the true religious spirit, the father of our subject was one of the first to welcome the revival. He instilled the principles of piety in his little son and the lessons were not lost. Young Elling early determined to be a preacher, and, taking up the work of Hauge, he wandered over Norway, Sweden and Denmark, as an evangelist. In 1839 he came to America, and the next year preached his first sermon in this country in the then little frontier town of Chicago, the services being held in a little log house owned by an Englishwoman. In the autumn of 1842, he went to New York City to obtain a supply of books for the scattered Norwegian settlements of Wisconsin, and came back on foot and alone in the midst of the winter, suffering almost unparalleled privations. He reached Milwaukee on New Year's day, 1843. On July 3, of the same year he was married to Miss Sigri Nielson, a daughter of Hermond Nielson of North Cape, and on Oct. 3, was ordained clergyman for America at Duncan's Grove, Illinois, twenty miles north of Chicago. Here he built a small house, the attic of which served as his chapel. In 1844, the first Norwegian Lutheran church in America, a small log structure, was built in Pleasant Springs, Dane county, and here Eielson occasionally preached. Eielson's strength lay in his powers as an evangelist and as such he regularly visited the Norwegian settlements of Wisconsin and neighboring states. While on these expeditions he carried an axe, a rubber coat, a coffee kettle and a compass and camped out wherever night overtook him. He became a friend of the Indians, and, while wandering through Missouri, he conceived the idea of living with them, that he might learn their language and serve as an evangelist among them. Robust though he was, he could not, however, endure what the Indians could and he was forced to give up the undertaking. Eielson did not confine himself very closely to established orthodoxy and hence became involved in much trouble with Rev. J. W.



Dietrichson, of Koshkonong, who traveled about doing over the ceremonies of baptism, confirmation and marriage that Eielson had performed.

In 1855-6 the pioneers of Primrose built their first church and Eielson became its pastor. In 1859 he made a journey to Texas and labored hard to eradicate the French philosophy of infidelity that had taken root among the Norwegians settled there. Two years later he resolved to visit his native land again, but the enmity he had aroused gave him no rest, for he was followed even there by the Revs. Dietrichson and Stub, who stumped Norway and endeavored to undo his good work. He remained abroad nearly two years. In 1873 he made Chicago his home, his previous home being at Jefferson Prairie, near Clinton, Wis. In 1881 he made a visit to Primrose, and while there he fell dangerously sick. He died at Chicago Jan. 10, 1883, and his remains were laid at rest in Graceland cemetery. Eielson was an extensive land owner in Primrose, owning the present M. P. Myrland farm and Mrs. A. Langelie's, in section 28, and that of Jacob Volkevar in section 30.

The second or third religious organization in Primrose was effected in 1854, by Rev. Adolph C. Preus, whom his enemies ungenerously loved to dub "Alle Christen's Plage." A large stone school house, later called the "Brodahl Church," was built in this year, that religious services might be carried on within it. A burial ground was also established near by. Over twenty families united, the organization joining the Norse Lutheran Synod. Mr. Preus was succeeded by P. M. Brodahl.

During this time, however, that part of the church that had seceded with Rasmussen in 1856, had remained outside of either organization. Mr. Rasmussen was retained as minister and services were held chiefly in the school houses of Districts No. 5 and 7. An amusing feature of the time was the frequent holding of services by Rev.

Messrs. Rasmussen and Brodahl on the same Sabbath at the stone school house of District No. 7, one party waiting outside until the other had left. Mr. Rasmussen was succeeded by John Fjeld. In 1864, these congregations united, Mr. Brodahl retiring and Mr. Fjeld assuming charge of both.

In 1866 a church was built on section 28 at a cost of over \$2,000. One night in the autumn of 1873, this church was burned to the ground. The next year another was built eighty rods east at about the same cost, A Longelie being the architect. The windows used in this church were donated by the Lisbon, Ill., congregation, having served in the first church built there.

In 1868, however, the church became again divided, this time on the slavery question. A secession followed in Primrose and resulted in the formation of the Primrose Lutheran Conference Congregation; this was organized the next year by Rev. C. L. Clausen; among the families joining being those of T. Thorstensen, Anon Gullickson, B. O. Skuldt, H. O. Skuldt and Mons Ness. Services were held in private houses and school houses, chiefly in the school house of District No. 5 until January 1, 1891, when the congregation again joined the Synod from which it had seceded. Rev. Mr. Clausen was succeeded by Prof. A. Wenaas, he by Rev. M. F. Gjertsen; who served for many years. Revs. F. Dahl, P. Reimestad and O. Paulsen were the last pastors. Rev. Mr. Fjeld retired from service in 1883, and was followed by O. Isberg who served until 1888. Rev. H. Voldal, the present pastor, took charge in 1889.

The earliest religious instructors for the young, among the Norwegians were Ole Stoutland and Peter Havreberg.

#### A METHODIST CHURCH.

The Primrose Norse Methodist church is of unusual interest from the fact that its organizers and early minis-

ters were the pioneer organizers of the Norse-Danish Methodist church in North America, and men who have risen to the highest distinction in their church. It was organized by Rev. Chr. B. Willerup, a Dane, the second Scandinavian Methodist minister in America, who three years earlier had organized the first Scandinavian Methodist church in America, at Cambridge, Wis. Rev. L. Peterson assisted in the organization and was made the first pastor. The congregation was small and services were held in private houses and the school house of district No. 4. The church was included in the Cambridge district.

In 1858, Rev. A. Haagensen, now of Chicago, took charge, Rev. Mr. Haagensen was the first local Norse Methodist preacher in America, and a celebrated organizer. J. H. Johnson succeeded him in 1862, but almost immediately joined the Fifteenth Wisconsin, as chaplain. C. P. Agrelius, who took charge in 1863, was another remarkable man. He was a Swedish minister of the Lutheran church but became converted to Methodism and traveled about the west preaching to the Scandinavians his new doctrines. He preached at Cambridge before Willerup made his appearance, being thus the first of his church in the west. When the first Norse-Danish Methodist church was built at St. Paul, in 1854, Agrelius was made its pastor. He remained in Primrose four years, living on the present Hoffman farm. In 1867, P. Jensen took charge, and in this year a small log church was erected on section 26 at a cost of \$100. The building still stands. Later ministers were Revs. C. F. Eltzholtz, R. Olsen and O. J. Sacker. No regular service has been held during the last dozen years, as most of the families of the congregation have moved westward, that of S. Ellefs being the only one remaining.

This Methodist congregation established a burying ground behind the old log school house of District No. 4,

and many of the earliest Norwegians to die are buried there, among them Colburn Colby and Mrs. Christian Hendrickson, who died of cholera in 1854. Here also is buried Rev. Samuel Anderson, a man celebrated in the history of the Norse-Danish Methodist church, who died in Primrose in 1860. Rev. Mr. Anderson organized a Methodist church at Racine, Wis., in 1853, and in 1854 built the first Norse-Methodist church in St. Paul, having gathered the funds in the east. In this cemetery also sleeps pioneer K. Moland.



## CHAPTER VIII.

PRIMROSE DURING THE WAR — THE WANDERING MAN — TOWN  
MEETINGS — ROSTER OF TROOPS.

Scarce a week had elapsed after Sumpter's flag was fired upon before Primrose boys were to the front in response to President Lincoln's first call for troops.

The first man to enlist from Primrose for the suppression of the rebellion was James H. Smith, who entered the Second Wisconsin Infantry, April 24, 1861. Two days later Lawrence Post, of Perry, then a farm hand employed by Hall C. Chandler, joined the Third Wisconsin, and Charles Crown the Fifth. One of the first to volunteer was William E. Moon, listed as "The Wandering Man." Mr. Moon had just opened the school in District No. 1 when President Lincoln issued his first call for volunteers. He made an inspiring speech to his pupils, firing them with patriotic fervor and informing them of his purpose to enlist. It was a pathetic leave taking. Mr. Moon also remained in correspondence with his pupils until he was killed, and the news of his death affected them greatly.

Many war meetings were held at the present Town Hall and other places, and enlistment went on rapidly. Among the speakers who regularly appeared at these meetings to rouse the people were Gen. George E. Bryant, Hon. John A. Johnson and Hon. Willet S. Main, of Madison, and Hon. Russel Crocker of Montrose. The flag, the fife and drum were conspicuous at these meetings, and a woman of the time says: "We women and children also turned out and there were many pathetic incidents. Often in one corner of the room would be found a group making merry and singing patriotic songs, while in another corner would

sit some family who had lost some one dear to them, weeping, and reproaching the others for their light-heartedness."

Some of the troops enlisted under local officers at the Hauge church. During the early fall of 1862, eleven men of Company K, Twenty-eighth Wisconsin, with other recruits from Perry and York, spent three weeks in hard drilling on W. C. B. Weltzin's meadow, before going to the front, boarding with Mr. Weltzin and sleeping in a barn. Mr. Syver Holland acted as drill-master. The Primrose recruits were N. N. Byrge; K. Aslakson; Thomas Chantland; T. O. Gordon; Erick Colby; Anun Hansen; William Jacobson; Sjur Knutson; S. Oleson; H. S. Holland; N. O. Sjurson.

In the gallant Fifteenth Wisconsin, Primrose was especially well represented.

A celebrated bounty jumper who gave the United States officers much trouble was Robert D. Ranson; time and time again did he evade them but he was finally taken to the South and sentenced to death, but escaped the last moment on a technicality in spelling his name.

Toward the close of the war as the demand for troops increased, numerous special town meetings were held to raise bounty money, that the town's quota might be filled. Much money was raised by private subscription. The total amount paid by the town was \$12,837.51. The first of these special meetings, as recorded, was held January 25, 1864, and \$2000 were voted, the town supervisors being instructed to obtain volunteers as cheap as possible, and to turn the balance into the town treasury. Of the ninety votes cast, seventy were for such a measure, and twenty against, "it being noticeable" says one "that those in no danger of being drafted, such as the old or crippled almost invariably opposed the raising of bounty money at these meetings." March 16, 1864, the second meeting was held at the Town Hall and \$1,200 payable in town orders at

seven per cent interest were voted. March 30, 1864, \$1,200 more was voted and a resolution passed: "That if the town could not hire volunteers, \$250 should be paid to every man drafted who owned real estate, and those not owning real estate were to pay \$15, into the town treasury within eight days in order to get the \$250."

Other meetings held with the amounts subscribed were: Aug. 16, 1864, \$2,000; Aug. 26, 1864, \$3,000; Jan. 14, 1865, \$1000; Feb. 25, 1865, "\$200 for each volunteer or drafted man and \$400 for each man that has enlisted heretofore."

In consequence of these acts the town supervisors were kept in Madison the greater part of the last years of the war, obtaining troops. One of them says reminiscently:

"Men would hang around the street corners and sell themselves to the highest bidder. And they were in big demand. The first questions asked a new man on entering the city were: 'Are you sold yet?' 'What'll you take?' One morning thirteen men came up from Spring Green and I determined to secure the whole baker's dozen. They had been offered \$300 apiece before coming up but I made an offer of \$325 apiece to them. After debating some time the leader announced that they would go in together at my offer. I could not obtain the money, however, until the banks opened at 9 o'clock, still two hours, and I had to do a good deal of bluffing to keep other seekers from tempting them.

"At one time our whole town board was drafted and we were in a stew. We felt, however, that we could serve our country better at home, at least our skins would be safer, and we looked about for substitutes. Fortunately we got them right in Primrose. But some mischief maker whispered in their ears that substitutes were always placed in the most dangerous positions in battle and those of my colleagues backed out. I started off in high glee with mine, but on arriving at Janesville, the mustering place, he was put on the scales and, alas! was too light.

I hurried back to Madison and influential friends sought to help me out on the only possible plea,—poor health. I was at the time a most robust specimen of physical manhood and the case seemed hopeless. Returning to Janesville, I was stripped and put through a round of acrobatic performances, such as running round the room, jumping over drygoods boxes, etc. My heart was pounding tremendously, not from the exercise but from fear of having to enlist when the physician put his ear to my breast. He shook his head at once though and said, ‘No, that man won’t do. His heart is too weak,’ which was indeed too true.

“On coming out, my colleague saw my happy face and surmised the outcome. ‘How much did you pay them?’ he asked desperately, driving his hand into his pocket. ‘Not a cent’ I proudly answered. He was taken in and examined but the examination was against him. He was told he would have to go. He had sprained his ankle a few days before and now cried indignantly: ‘What! a lame man like me? why I can’t walk!’ ‘O that’ll be all right’ the mustering officer replied, smiling dryly, ‘you wont have to walk, we’ll put you in the artillery service to guard forts, where all you have to do is to shoot and get shot. I guess you’ll do for that.’

“He managed to obtain a substitute however and escaped service.”

A complete roster of Primrose troops as gathered from the records hereby follows:

SECOND INFANTRY—COMPANY H.

James H. Smith, April 24, 1861; July 14, 1865; sergt. major  
Co. G, Sixth Regulars, Jan. 1, 1865.

Henry A. Smith, May 23, 1861; June 14, 1864.

William E. Moon, “The Wandering Man,” May 23, 1861;  
killed at Gainesville, Va., Aug. 28, 1862.

THIRD INFANTRY—COMPANY C.

Allen Wales, Feb. 27, 1864.



## COMPANY K.

Lawrence Post, April 26, 1861; July 14, 1864; captured at Cedar Mountain.  
Asle O. Hanum, May 2, 1861; Dec. 2, 1862.

## FIFTH INFANTRY—COMPANY I.

Charles Crown, April 26, 1861; July 14, 1864.  
Geo. B. Thomas, June 26, 1861; killed at Fredericksburg, Va., May 3, 1863.  
Geo. W. Chandler, July 20, 1861; Feb. 15, 1864.  
Andrew C. Baerstad, June 28, 1861; killed at Fredericksburg, May 3, 1863.

## EIGHTH INFANTRY—COMPANY E.

Harry Ash, Aug. 31, 1861; Sept. 16, 1864.  
John Bell, Aug. 31, 1861; Sept. 5, 1865.

## COMPANY H.

Nils Olson, Sept. 21, 1861; died, Keokuk, Ia., Aug. 4, 1862.  
Laurene Randall, Aug. 5, 1864; died Sept. 1, 1865.

## NINTH INFANTRY—COMPANY C.

Otto Wiesender, Feb. 17, 1865; Jan. 30, 1866.

## FIFTEENTH INFANTRY—COMPANY B.

Knud Johnson.

## COMPANY E.

John Peters, Nov. 11, 1861; Dec. 20, 1864; sergt. and 2nd lieut., Nov. 11, 1863.  
Gunder Gunderson, Nov. 12, 1861; Dec. 20, 1864; sergt.  
Andrew Johnson, corp., Nov. 6, 1861; wounded at Stone River; died at New Albany, Indiana, Mar. 18, 1863.  
Peter Johnson, Dec. 20, 1861; Dec. 20, 1864; wounded at New Hope Church, Dec. 2, 1864.  
Peter W. Chantland, 2nd lieut., Dec. 8, 1861; Nov. 18, 1863; sergt. April 9, 1863.  
Torbjorn Erikson, Nov. 26, 1861; died Nov. 15, 1862 at Edgefield, Tenn.

John M. Johnson, Nov. 1, 1861; Dec. 20, 1864.

Christ Erikson.

Job Tjerans, Nov. 1, 1861; died at Murfreesboro, May 15, 1863.

COMPANY G.

Ole Colby, Jan. 3, 1862; Jan. 13, 1865.

Elias Christopherson, Nov. 26, 1861; Jan. 13, 1865; wounded at Atlanta.

Henry O. Hendrikson, Nov. 11, 1861; Jan. 13, 1865; corp.

Ole O. Nelson.

John H. Johnson, Nov. 4, 1861; Jan. 13, 1865; corp.

Nils K. Luraas, Nov. 20, 1861; Jan. 13, 1865.

Nils Erickson, Feb. 26, 1864.

COMPANY H.

Gunner Severson, Dec. 2, 1861; Dec. 16, 1862.

Ingebret Johnson, Dec. 17, 1861; died at Nashville, Tenn., Dec. 23, 1862.

COMPANY I.

Newton K. Andrew, Jan. 15, 1862; Feb. 10, 1865; corp.

Tollef Olson, Dec. 16, 1861; June 24, 1862.

Henry Brown, Feb. 17, 1864; recruit.

Knud K. Landgra.

Thomas Toleson.

Ingebret O. Bolstad, Oct. 22, 1861; Feb. 10, 1865.

Robert Watson, Feb. 18, 1864.

John H. Johnson, chaplain, Oct. 19, 1864.

SIXTEENTH INFANTRY — COMPANY B.

Edwin R. Cook, Feb. 16, 1864; July 24, 1865.

Wm. W. Bunker, Feb. 24, 1864; died at Keokuk, Ia. Sept. 30, 1864.

SEVENTEENTH INFANTRY — COMPANY H.

Ira Holden, Feb. 5, 1862; April 9, 1862.

TWENTY-SEVENTH INFANTRY — COMPANY H.

John Nelson, Aug. 15, 1862; Aug. 29, 1865.

## TWENTY-EIGHTH INFANTRY—COMPANY K.

Knut Asiakson, Aug. 14, 1862; died April 5, 1863 at Greenwood, Miss.

Sunder Steverson, Aug. 21, 1862; died Dane County, June 26, 1863.

Nils O. Sjurson, Aug. 18, 1862; Aug. 23, 1865.

Sam Oleson.

T. C. Chandler.

John Williamson, Aug. 14, 1862; May 28, 1863.

Knud Oscarson.

Tollof O. Gordon, Aug. 14, 1862; died at Helena, Ark., Feb. 15, 1863.

Ole Nelson.

N. N. Byrge, Aug. 21, 1862; Aug. 23, 1865.

Erick Colby, Aug. 21, 1862; Aug. 23, 1865.

Thomas Chantland, Aug. 15, 1862; Aug. 23, 1865; corp.

William Jacobson, Aug. 21, 1862; Aug. 19, 1865.

Anun Hansen, Aug. 21, 1862; June 10, 1865; corp.

Haldor S. Holland, Aug. 14, 1862; May 22, 1865; sergt.

Samuel Olsen, Aug. 21, 1862; Aug. 23, 1865.

## THIRTY-THIRD INFANTRY—COMPANY K.

Ed. S. Ketchum, Aug. 21, 1862; Aug. 9, 1865; corp.

Columbus Hatch, Aug. 19, 1862; Aug. 9, 1865.

Peter Bell, Aug. 14, 1862; Aug. 9, 1865.

Lewis Jain, Aug. 14, 1862; Aug. 9, 1865; wounded, Comargo, Miss.

John B. Jain, Aug. 20, 1862; Aug. 9, 1865.

John F. Cross, Aug. 15, 1862; Aug. 9, 1865; sergt.

Robert. D. Ransom, Aug. 21, 1862; deserted, Oct. 25, 1862.

## THIRTY-SEVENTH INFANTRY—COMPANY C.

John J. Argue, March 30, 1864; July 10, 1865.

Thomas W. Argue, March 31, 1864; died, June 25, 1864; corp.

## FORTY-THIRD INFANTRY—COMPANY I.

Geo. Jackson, capt., Sept. 16, 1864; June 24, 1865.

Ole N. Bjorge, Sept. 3, 1864; died at Jeffersonville, Ind.,  
Nov. 22, 1864.

Andrew N. Brones, Sept. 6, 1864; June 24, 1865.

Peter N. Brones, Sept. 7, 1864; June 24, 1865.

Andrew Charleson, Sept. 2, 1864; June 24, 1865, corp.

Martin Nelson, Sept. 3, 1864; June 24, 1865.

Sever Olsen, Aug. 27, 1864; June 24, 1865.

Osmund Osmundsen, Aug. 25, 1864; June 24, 1865.

Knud Sorenson, Aug. 25, 1864; June 24, 1865.

Knud Tollef, Aug. 31, 1864: June 24, 1865.

## FORTY-FIFTH INFANTRY — COMPANY F.

Annun A. Jorgen, Jan. 24, 1865; July 17, 1865.

## FORTY-SIXTH INFANTRY — COMPANY D.

John Paulson, Feb. 14, 1865; Oct. 14, 1865.

Christian Syverson, Feb. 14, 1865; Sept. 27, 1865.

John Charleson, Feb. 14, 1865; Sept. 27, 1865.

Anun O. Danielson, Feb. 14, 1865; Sept. 27, 1865.

Andrew E. Lewis, Feb. 14, 1865; Sept. 27, 1865.

## FORTY-SEVENTH INFANTRY — COMPANY E.

G. H. Ames, Jan. 30, 1865; Sept. 4, 1865.

Ansel O. Ash, Jan. 30, 1865; May 27, 1865.

William L. Hollar, Jan. 24, 1865; July 14, 1865; musician.

George P. Ketchum, Jan. 24, 1865; died, Feb. 22, 1865, at  
Madison, Wis.

## FIFTY-SECOND INFANTRY — COMPANY A.

George R. Baxter, Feb. 28, 1865; deserted, March 2, 1865.



## CHAPTER IX.

MISCELLANEOUS—A BEAR HUNT—THE BELL SUIT—THE MOB-  
BING OF THE BYAMS—THE BRITTS MILL.

1851.—In this year by act of the legislature, Messrs. Sylvester Wheeler, Matthew Hause, Joel Britts, John L. Sarten and Jonas Loveless were appointed commissioners "to lay out and establish a state road beginning at the junction of the Madison and Verona state road in the county of Dane, thence southwest on the present road, or as near as practicable to Wiota in the county of La Fayette."

1854.—In the summer of this year Colburn Colby, who had brought a load of emigrants from Milwaukee to Rock Prairie, was seized with the Asiatic cholera and died. On August 2, of the same year, Mrs. Christian Hendrickson was carried away by the same disease.

1856.—In the winter of 1856 a celebrated bear hunt was enjoyed by the citizens of Primrose and Springdale. Early in the winter Mr. Nash, who lived on the present Dahl farm in Springdale, noticed the tracks of a bear on the snow in his cornfield. Thomas Bently, living on the present Fargo farm, was the Daniel Boone of the day and he gathered a force to hunt the animal down. Mr. Axium Malone was the first to discover it. In riding next day past the "Dahl" cave, in which the bear had made his den, he suddenly came upon the beast in a thicket. His horse made a start and stumbled over a stump, Mr. Malone breaking three ribs and being otherwise injured by the fall. While Mr. Malone was conveyed home the bear escaped his pursuers and fled into the town of Primrose, passing southward somewhere between the Webber spring and Mr. Britts' house. The next day nearly seventy men

and boys were hot on its trail, on horseback and foot, accompanied by many dogs. It was finally treed in a black oak in N. N. Byrge's pasture and "Jim" Dudley and Ed. Britts came up and shot it. The animal was a black one weighing four hundred pounds. The farmers stripped off the skin and dividing up the flesh went home to enjoy the steak. The stump of the tree in which the bear took refuge is still to be seen on Mr. Byrge's farm.

In this year a small store was opened by Sevilian Phillips on the site of the present Rock Hill Cheese Factory. The building was a small poplar log structure with a four foot counter, and was utilized as a store but a short time. Josiah La Follette built the first frame house in Primrose in this year.

1857.—In 1857, the first serious instance of corruption in the town government was discovered. In balancing the books of the retiring treasurer, Joseph H. Bell, it was found that the expenditures of the town for the year 1856 had been \$1,387.12, and the receipts \$1,479.57, leaving a balance of \$92.45, of which no account was given. Suit was immediately brought by the supervisors of the town against the ex-treasurer and his sureties, Peter Bell and Norman Randall. The case was first called before Justice William Sweet, of Springdale, J. P. Mc Pherson, of Springdale, appearing as attorney for the town supervisors. From here the case was carried before Judge Luther S. Dixon, of the circuit court of Dane county, Hon. S. U. Pinney appearing as attorney for the defendants and J. H. Carpenter and J. P. Mc Pherson for the plaintiffs. A flaw having been discovered, the suit was withdrawn, March 23, 1859, and the costs of about \$100.00, were assessed to the town.

1858.—The last town meeting in the school house of District No. 1, was held April 6, 1858. Ten dollars was voted for guide boards, at this meeting. It was then voted to hold the next election "in the new meeting

house," the Hauge church. This occurred November 2, 1858, and the next town meeting was held in the "Chandler" school house, the present town hall, which had been built the previous year.

In the summer of this year was built the Britts' Mill (section 8), by Ed. Britts and Charles Smith. It was built of stone, provided with ponderous wooden wheels, and was a popular resort in its day. In the early eighties the wooden wheels were replaced with a turbine water wheel and improved machinery by C. W. Karn. One night in September, 1887, while in possession of Nick. Hentgen, the mill was burnt to the ground, doubtless by incendiarism. The walls still stand but no attempt has been made to rebuild it.

1859.—In this year occurred the mobbing of the Byam brothers of Mt. Vernon, by the farmers of Primrose, who now rallied for the last time in response to the old "Club Law." Dr. Philander Byam and his two brothers had by means of selling patent rights on churns and buggy springs, succeeded in defrauding many of the surrounding farmers of their lands. Public feeling against them ran so high that at last on the night of October 24, 1859, a band of about seventy of the farmers of Primrose rallied and choosing R. B. Chandler leader, marched to the village of Mt. Vernon, determined to teach the offenders a lesson. The house of Dr. Byam stood south of the mill just inside the Primrose line, and the family had retired when the farmers arrived. They began calling for the doctor, who sent his wife out to say that he was not at home. The farmers, however, knew that he was and not to be "bluffed," they immediately began tearing down the house with axes and crowbars. Dr. Byam then opened an upstairs window and with an oath yelled out: "If it weren't for the infant in the cradle here, a half-dozen of you would be lying dead out there." "Mr. Byam will you please come down and go with us over to the mill?" asked Mr. Chandler,



“we’re going to hold a meeting there.” This he at first refused to do, but on the pledge that no harm would be done him, finally yielded. At the mill a sort of a trial was held, and several speeches were made. He was of course found guilty of many misdemeanors and “Col.” Kelly, of Mt. Vernon, in concluding the speech-making finished thus: “Now, Mr. Byam, and that means every Byam in Mt. Vernon, one of two things you can do,—leave Mt. Vernon, every soul of you, inside of twenty-four hours, or stay and be hanged.” One of the brothers, who lived with an old crony in a cabin near the “Big Rock,” was given a coating of tar and feathers. The next morning they hired teams and moved at once to Madison. One of them had the temerity to return for a load of hay on the Bell farm, (John Tascher’s), but when he had reached the top of the “Mill” hill with it, someone slipped up behind and wantonly set fire to it, causing the team to run away and furnishing an exciting spectacle for the village. A suit for \$10,000 damages, was immediately brought in the circuit court against R. B. Chandler, Hall C. Chandler, J. T. Chandler, H. M. La Follette, William La Follette, Joseph A. Bell, Peter Bell, Joseph A. Britts, William W. Miner, David Ash, George H. Orr, Dean H. Eastman and Eliphalet Thomas. J. C. Hopkins appeared as attorney for the plaintiffs, and Johnson, Rollins, Smith, Keyes and Gay for the defendants. Over fifty witnesses were subpoenaed, practically all the residents in the vicinity, and on April 19, 1860, a judgment of \$330.00, was given the plaintiffs, the costs amounting to \$78.26. Messrs. Dean Eastman and Eliphalet Thomas, were exempted by the jury from any part of the judgment. As other suits were threatened, Mr. Harvey M. La Follette, to avoid losing all his property sold his farm and moved back to Indiana, but with generous loyalty to his friends sent back his share of the assessments on the suits following. Further suits were instituted by the Byams in the federal court at Madison, but these resulted in a victory for the farmers.



1860.—At the national election, the Lincoln electors received one hundred and twenty votes, the Douglas electors twenty-one.

1864.—The Lincoln electors received one hundred and fifteen votes, Mc Clellan, twenty.

1868.—Grant electors received one hundred and forty-nine votes, Seymour, thirty-two. G. Tollefson elected member of Assembly.

1871.—In June 1871, a dozen property holders of the town petitioned for a special town meeting, to vote on the question of granting aid to the Sugar River Railroad, a project then under consideration. The railroad was to run within one-half mile of Paoli and Belleville in the town of Montrose, with a station at each place. The meeting was held July 1, and resulted in two votes for the railroad, and eighty-seven against.

1872.—W. C. B. Weltzin elected clerk of Dane county.

1879.—Mrs. Anna Hanna opened a store on Section 16, in this year, which was maintained for a number of years.

1881.—March 13, 1881, Mr. Christian Hendrickson, the first Scandinavian settler in Primrose, committed suicide by hanging in his barn. The news was a great shock to the community as Mr. Hendrickson was a well to do and highly respected citizen. For the grateful services which he often rendered his countrymen who followed him, he deserves high praise. Further notices of him in this volume reveals the high trust in which he was held.

1882.—The Peerless Cheese Factory built.

1884.—Standard, "Domholt" and Rock Hill cheese factories built.

1888.—"Colby" Cheese Factory built.

1893.—On Sept. 5, 1893, an old settlers' picnic was held at Primrose church. A large crowd was present, many from adjoining towns. Among the speakers of the day were Messrs. John A. Johnson, of Madison; Lawrence

Post, of Perry; Hollis Crocker, of Montrose; Gunof Tollefson, of Primrose; Rev. O. Paulson, of La Fayette county; P. O. Stromme, of Mt. Horeb; and Rev. H. Voldal. Mrs. Turner, of Belleville, one of the first white women in Dane county, was an interesting visitor.

1894.—Primrose Norse Evangelical Lutheran Church built.



Hon. P. O. BAKER,  
Chairman Supervisors, 1879-1889.

## CHAPTER X.

MISCELLANEOUS — ORGANIZATIONS — THE GREAT TORNADO —  
CRIMES — THE CHRISTEN MURDER.

THE PRIMROSE FARMERS' CLUB — FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY.

The first organization in Primrose of any importance, with the exception of the church organizations, was the Primrose Farmers' Club, an outgrowth of the popular Granger movement of the early seventies. The club was organized at the school house in District No. 1, May 10, 1873. The object of the organization was for mutual improvement in the discussion of agricultural methods and for advantageous co-operation in the purchase of goods. The first officers of the club were: Ole Barton, president; O. G. Stamn and Charles Crown, vice-presidents; N. N. Byrge, secretary; P. O. Baker, treasurer. Five directors, O. G. Stamn, Ole Barton, Eli Pederson, P. O. Baker and T. Thorstenson, were also elected. The club consisted of about one hundred members, and regular meetings were held at various places until 1877. The most important result of the organization was the formation by its members of the Primrose Fire Insurance Company, April 25, 1874, for mutual protection against losses by fire. This was the pioneer company of its kind in its locality. The original subscribers of this company were: Ole Barton, N. Swager, A. S. Holland, Eli Peterson, O. K. Nessa, J. G. Hanna, Lars. L. Kolve, P. O. Baker, George Thompson, Thomas Zimmerman, Syver Neseim, Hans Anderson, O. G. Stamn, G. Gullickson, L. L. Skaar, A. Anderson, O. P. Myrland, P. E. Call, G. O. Stamn, P. Lensworth, T. Thorstenson, S. A. Wallen, K. O. Gordon, O. E. Stamn, L. M. Olson, J. Anderson, O. Slaaten, C. Hendrickson.

A capital stock of \$25,000, was subscribed.

The company has been very fortunate, having suffered but four serious losses since its organization, \$500, for the burning of Andrew Anderson's house; \$600, for the burning of Eli Pederson's granary in 1891, and \$800, for the burning of Ole Hustad's house in 1893. On November 28, 1894, Bower Bowerson's house was destroyed, making the fourth loss.

#### THE PRIMROSE UNION CHEESE FACTORY ASSOCIATION.

The formation of this company was important as it took the first step in the building of cheese factories in the town. The company was organized Feb. 6, 1878, and a factory for the manufacture of limburger cheese was built near Mr. Tascher's home. The following were the original members of the association: John Tascher, M. Schlimgen, M. F. Van Norman, M. C. Webber, Ole Barton, D. H. Eastman, H. Johnson and C. J. Weltzin.

#### PRIMROSE ANTI-HORSE-THIEF ASSOCIATION.

This association was organized January 24, 1891, for the protection of its members against horse-thieves, who had alarmed and irritated the people of the town for a few years. Several meetings were held and twenty-one articles of protection were drawn up and signed. The active members of the association consist of a president, two vice-presidents, a secretary and a treasurer. Ten riders are elected to assist the proper authorities in case of theft. No horse stealing, however, has been committed since the association was formed. The following were the original members: C. Danielson, (president), N. N. Byrge, O. G. Stamm, H. H. Anderson, G. G. Stamm, John Wallen, H. O. Skuldt.

#### PRIMROSE FARMERS' CORNET BAND.

This band was organized August 8, 1890, with the following members: O. E. Stamm, J. H. Domholt, O. O. Holman,



C. O. Weltzin, S. H. Skuldt, H. N. Byrge, O. Anderson, O. L. Kleppe, O. E. Slaaten, O. G. Lee, G. G. Stamm, O. J. Slaaten, M. O. Slaaten, G. W. Weltzin,

#### THE CHRISTEN MURDER.

The worst crime that ever stained the soil of Primrose was the murder of Cheesemaker William Christen, by John Kuehni, in December, 1888. In its sickening and cold-blooded brutality this crime remains almost unparalleled. It was committed on the night of December 12, 1888, at the Holland Cheese Factory in the north-east corner of Section 16, where Christen, an inoffensive bachelor of thirty, was employed as cheesemaker. John Kuehni, the murderer, was a young desperado of twenty-five who had been but fourteen months in this country, coming from Switzerland, in which country he had previously been imprisoned for petty crimes. Christen was murdered for his money, he having in his possession at the time between three and four hundred dollars of wages for his summer's work. It was Kuehni's plan to secure this money, return to Switzerland and spend the remainder of his life among his native mountains. The story of the discovery of the crime, its revolting nature, and the miscarriage of Kuehni's plans are essentially as follows:

On the afternoon of December 21, 1888, the brothers George and William Rea, of Mt. Vernon, were fishing in the little brook that flows just below the Holland Cheese Factory. About ninety rods east of the factory, in a pool of the bright clear water, they discovered an old grain sack weighted to the bottom with something inside. "Looks like there might be a jug in it," said one, "let's pull it out." They pulled it out with a fish pole, cut it open, and shook out a stone, a pair of wooden shoes, a liver and intestines, and to their horror and amazement,—a human head. N. N. Byrge was sent for and identified the head at once as that of William Christen. Sheriff Estes

was immediately informed and the next morning Justice Ole Barton empanelled a coroner's jury, John Tascher, G. Anonson, M. Hobbs, Eli Pederson, P. O. Baker and K. P. Myrland, which convened in the said factory and fixed the guilt of murder at once on Kuehni. In the meantime Kuehni had a week's start. He was traced to Monroe, Wisconsin, thence to Philadelphia, where he had taken passage on the American Line steamer, Lord Gough, bound for Basle, Switzerland. He was intercepted, however, by a cablegram, and was arrested by a London detective immediately on his landing in England, December 29. Sheriff Estes and Peter Sangesend, crossed the water in pursuit, and on February 22, had him safely lodged in Dane county jail.

From circumstantial evidence and the murderer's own testimony, it was gathered that he had killed Christen in his bed by striking him on the head with a stick of wood. Kuehni was living with Christen at the time, the two being boon companions who often drank and hunted together.

After the murder, Kuehni hung cheese cloth over the windows of the factory, and taking the body into the cellar, cut it up with an axe. A part of the body he burned on the cellar floor, a part was buried in a neighboring grove, and the head, liver and intestines thrown into the stream.

The murderer at first maintained his innocence and manifested a stolid indifference, but later confessed his guilt and was sent to Waupun for life.

#### KILLING OF HYDE.

On the night of July 4, 1884, Frank Hyde, of New Glarus was killed in a drunken street fight in that village, by William Wagner, a farm hand in the employ of Charles Dixon, of Primrose. Wagner pounded his victim to death with brass knuckles. After the killing he coolly returned

to his work, making no attempt at escape. He was arrested the next day, tried at Monroe, Wisconsin, and sentenced to twenty years in the penitentiary for manslaughter.

In the latter part of the eighties a series of the most annoying of petty crimes to the farmers of Primrose was committed — horse-stealing. The first one to suffer was George Bowers, who in 1887 had a valuable mare stolen. In the same year, Nels Hustad lost one, and the year following, Ole L. Myrland was the victim, losing a good horse. The last victim was Syver Skuldt, who one night in the summer of 1890, lost an excellent animal. No clue was found leading to a punishment of these crimes until some time after the last was committed, when a detective found the rogue in C. J. Agrelius, a former harnessmaker of Mt. Vernon, who had spirited these horses away to his home in north-western Illinois. Agrelius was taken to Madison for trial, confessed to all the thefts, and was sent to Wau-pun for a few years.

#### THE GREAT TORNADO OF 1878.

The great tornado that swept through the town of Primrose on the afternoon of May 23, 1878, was the most appalling calamity that has ever fallen upon its inhabitants. No one save those who witnessed and survived it can comprehend its grandeur and horror. The mightiest oaks of the forest were torn up by the roots, houses were seen tossed to the clouds, and then sown in countless fragments over the surrounding country, while in its midst was a night of inky blackness, in which lightning, rain and immense falling hailstones added to the horror of the deafening crash, and the savage fury of the wind. It struck the town about four o'clock in the afternoon of a pleasant day, in which the unsuspecting farmers were all about their wonted labors in the fields. Its duration was but a few moments, yet in that time, three lives were lost in Primrose, many



persons were injured, and an immense amount of property destroyed. Fortunately the width of the storm was but a few rods. An excellent account of its passage and its destructive nature is given in Mr. Butterfield's History of Dane county (1880), from which we include the following, descriptive of its passage through Primrose:

"The storm passed into the town of Primrose on both sides of the line separating sections 7 and 18.. In the south-west corner of Section 18, the house and out-buildings of M. Oberemt, were swept away. The house was torn to pieces and scattered to the south and south-west. Mr. Oberemt and seven children were in the house at the time, and were thrown into the yard with the flying fragments of the house. One boy, fifteen years of age, was carried fifteen rods nearly south into a ravine. Although the ground was so thickly strewn with the ruins as to be literally covered for one hundred yards to the south and southeast, no one of these eight persons was seriously injured. The farm wagon, before the storm, stood six rods east of the house, after the storm, it was in ruins, twelve rods *west of the house*. Fifty rods south of Mr. Oberemt's, where a granary was being built, a wagon loaded with lumber, was broken to pieces, one wheel was carried one-fourth of a mile directly east, and another, one and a fourth miles in the same direction. Nearly half a mile east of Mr. Oberemts, the house and out-buildings of John Osmonson were destroyed. Mr. Osmonson seeing that a severe storm was approaching, left the field where he was at work, that he might not get wet. Becoming somewhat alarmed at the roaring, the continous lightning and thunder, and the very threatning aspect of the sky, he waited only long enough to unharness one horse, hurried into the house and told his wife they must hasten to the cellar. A boy of fourteen and a girl of eight got into the cellar, and Mrs. Osmonson, with an infant three months old, was partly down when the house was taken bodily. At this



time, Mr. Osmonson, with a child in each hand, aged respectively four and six, stood at the cellar door waiting for the mother and babe to get fully down. Besides these, there was in the house a girl twelve years old. This girl was found thirty yards distant north of east, senseless, nearly buried in mud, with two severe scalp wounds and her right arm broken three times between the shoulder and elbow. About four rods north of the house was the border of a large field of second growth oak and poplar timber from twenty to forty feet in height. The house was carried over the timber, with Mr. Osmonson and the two children whom he still held firmly in his grasp. While in the air over this timber, the house went to pieces, the larger portion of it falling sixteen rods directly north of its starting point. One portion of the roof was twenty-five rods distant in a direction north, thirty degrees west, and another portion, sixty rods distant north, twenty-five degrees east. The stove was mainly found seven rods directly north of the principal ruins of the house, some parts, however, were carried several rods farther in the same direction.

“Mr. Osmonson and the two children fell about twenty feet north of the main ruins of the house. Mr. Osmonson had his face scratched and one rib broken in falling through the tops of a tree. The children were entirely unhurt, the youngest one did not even cry. Large hail was falling at the time and the children were laid under the ruins of the house, while the father hastened to find the other members of the family. The children in the cellar were not hurt, Mrs. Osmonson was injured in the back, probably by something striking her as the house moved off. The stable in which the horses had been put, was eight rods south-west of the house. One of the horses was blown into the cellar, and lay there upon his back when found, while the other was in the standing timber, twenty-two rods distant, with his hind feet resting upon

the ground while his fore feet were hanging upon a bent over sapling. The position of the horse and the thick growth of the timber, rendered it impossible for him to get there only by being carried above the tops of the trees and dropped down. He was uninjured. An iron pump, with forty-six feet of zinc pipe, was taken from a well and carried north-west a distance of fifteen rods. A lumber wagon was broken entirely to pieces. One wheel and an axle were carried north sixty-five degrees, east seventy-five rods, while the large portion of the remainder went north-east sixteen rods. One wheel was entirely broken to pieces, and the tire left hanging on a tree ten feet from the ground. This tire, one-half inch thick and one and one half inches wide and very slightly worn was broken twice in two and bent in such a manner as to show that it had been acted upon by a force of great power.

"Eighty rods north-east of Osmonson's house, stood a house belonging to Mrs. Ketchum. This was on the south side of a hill. It was taken bodily from the foundation, up the hill, north, and left in a little niche in the woods north-west from its starting point fifteen rods. The family escaped by going to the cellar.

"The storm bent to the north at this point. Its northern border struck the house of G. Gullikson, situated at the center of Section 9. This house was partially protected by standing timber, and was only slightly injured. A shed, rather slightly built, was torn away and carried directly west. Fifty rods south of the center of the west line of Section 10, the house of N. Byrge was totally destroyed. Byrge and his son were instantly killed. Their bodies when found lay in a ravine about fifteen rods north-east of the house. The stove and the larger part of the ruins of the house were found near them. A barrel was carried directly east half a mile. Mrs Byrge was injured to some extent. One man escaped by jumping into the cellar. Very nearly directly north from Byrge's and one hundred

rods distant, the barn, granary and haystacks of Mr. Hobbs were blown down, the debris falling directly south. Between Byrge's and Hobb's, a marsh some forty rods in width fairly bristled with pieces of board, timber and other debris, that had come from the house on the south and the barn on the north.

"Three-fourths of a mile further east, J. T. Chandler, had upon one side of the road a house and three barns, and upon the other side stood a house and barn belonging to R. B. Chandler. These buildings were utterly destroyed. It would be difficult to imagine a picture of greater desolation than was to be seen here after the storm. It was not over thirty rods from one extreme of this group of buildings to the other. The ruins were consequently strewn over a comparatively small space and were correspondingly thick. The broken foundation walls, the debris of the buildings, fragments of tables, bedsteads, bureaus and chairs, shreds of bedding and clothing, hanging upon bushes and trees or lying upon the ground in a state which rendered it difficult to distinguish the garment from the mud, gave the scene an indescribably saddening air of ruin and desolation.

"The debris of these buildings was thrown east and north-east, one piece of timber eight inches square and six feet long, was carried east one fourth of a mile. The sills of one barn were twelve inches square, one of these was broken in four pieces and the others in two. Very few whole timbers were left. The deed of J. T. Chandler's farm was found the next day nearly ten miles distant, directly east. A portion of an organ from R. B. Chandler's house, was found four and one fourth miles directly north, while the boiler and some cooking utensils, were carried east one mile. The family of J. T. Chandler escaped injury by going to the cellar. W. Osborne and family were living in R. B. Chandler's house. Mr. Osborne was slightly injured; Mrs. Osborne had one



leg broken twice, the knee of the other seriously injured, and was bruised all over by the hail; a daughter was so severely injured as not to be able to walk for three months. Seventeen pans of milk in the cellar were not disturbed by the storm.

“One mile east of Mr. Chandler’s, on the bank of Sugar River, R. Shepard’s granary and log house were destroyed. The stove, a part of the furniture and some of the logs of the house were blown into the river. A lady school teacher, boarding at the house, was saved from the same fate by a log falling on her and holding her down. Mrs. Shepard was somewhat hurt by falling hail. This house was on the northern border of the stream; one hundred rods, directly south, upon the southern border, the house of O. S. Olson was unroofed. Chandler’s buildings were in the center of the tornado’s path, which there was only eighty rods in width. It had consequently widened about twenty rods and curved slightly to the south between Chandler’s and Shepard’s. Near the center of the southwest quarter of Section 12, a log house was blown down and Mrs. Galena killed by falling timber. With the exception of the destruction of timber and the blowing down of fences, little damage was done for the next four and one-half miles.



Mrs. G. TOLLEFSON (KOLVE).  
A Representative Woman.



## CHAPTER XI.

## PRIMROSE DESCRIPTIVE.

Primrose is an excellent stock and grain region. Through the northern part of the town flows the west branch of the Sugar River and two tributaries of the same, which give the north half an abundance of water and meadow land, making it excellent for dairying, now the most marked industry of the inhabitants. The surface is undulating and agreeably diversified with oak openings and prairie, and in the south central part there is considerable high land.

The most striking natural curiosity in the town is "Devil's Chimney," in Section 11. This is a perpendicular sandstone rock, crowned by a large mass of the same stone and resembling very much a chimney, being fifty feet high, twenty-five feet in circumference at the base, and seventy-five feet in circumference at the top. Seen from a distance it lends a most picturesque charm to the surrounding scenery. Close at its base is a large flat rock known as the "Devil's Washbasin," because of a cavity in its top which is frequently filled with rainwater. Not far away is the "Devil's Bootjack."

The rocks doubtless received their names from some bluff pioneer explorer.

Names of visitors from all parts of the union are found carved upon these rocks. Near the top of the chimney is the inscription "L. L. B. '56," and close by "Geo. McFadden, H. S. Utley, 1858.

Owing to the difficulty of the feat, many daring souls have been tempted to climb the chimney. The story that Joel Britts scaled it in 1850 is denied by his sons. The first one known to have climbed the rock, for certain, was

Bert Olsen, who in 1859 achieved the feat by means of a rope. J. A. Oliver scaled it in 1873, and in 1877, J. A. Oliver, Henry Fulton and A. Warden climbed it by means of poles and ropes. In 1879, however, Frank Pierce performed the daring feat of climbing it unaided by either. He placed a handkerchief on a pole and returning three years later, climbed it again in the same way and took down the remnants of his handkerchief. The chimney has since been scaled by Prof. A. J. Olson and many others.

Mount Julia in Section 24, is another natural curiosity of note. This is an oblong ridge of rock 1700 feet long 200 feet high and 250 feet broad on top. It commands an extensive view of the surrounding country. One tradition says it took its name from that of an old woman who once lived in a cabin near its base, while another whispers of a romance.

There are three cemeteries in present use in the town. In Section 28 the two Lutheran congregations have each one, and in Section 22 is one maintained by the Baptists. In the latter are buried, Pioneer Norman Randall, who died December 23, 1886, aged 77 years, and two volunteers, Laurene Randall and George P. Ketchum, both of whom died in service in 1865. Among the pioneers buried in the Norse Evangelical Lutheran cemetery are Kund Bowerson, who died in 1871, aged 45 years, and Peter Myrland, who died in 1868, aged 66 years.

The population of the town is largely Scandinavian, the more restless and easy-going Yankee of the early day having been crowded out. Now the Scandinavians are being pressed out by the Swiss, whose greater industry and lower standard of living make them the fitter to survive in the narrowing circumstances of growing communities. The total population at present is 902; males, 495; females, 407; colored, 1. Of these 652 were born in the United States; 159 in Norway; 59 in Switzerland. There are 161 eligibles for the militia. Seven war veterans

are resident: Patrick Goggin, Company H, Eighth Wisconsin Vol. Inf.; John Peters, Company E, Fifteenth; Nils Hustad, Company G, Fifteenth; Ole Barton, Company D, Twenty-third; N. N. Byrge, Company K, Twenty-eighth; M. C. Webber, Company F, Forty-second; Osmund Osmundson, Company I, Forty-third.

The population of the town at the end of each five years of its history has been: 1850, (including Perry), 438; 1855, 631; 1860, 889; 1865, 867; 1870, 1015; 1875, 919; 1880, 888; 1885, 864; 1890, 890; 1895, 902.

Politically, Primrose has always been strongly republican. The town has been three times represented in the assembly of the State Legislature, in 1868 by Gunof Tollefson; 1882 by Eli Pederson; 1888 by P. O. Baker.

But few of the old pioneers remain. They are fast going and a new generation has come upon the scene to reap the reward of their heroic self sacrifices. All honor to their memories. With the pioneers are also going the old log cabins, and the writer in concluding this work would voice the general regret of the pioneers that thoughtless and irreverent hands should so fast sweep away these monuments to love and hardship, and so often needlessly. They too are fast going, and in a few years the rustic rambler will stumble across the green embankments of the latest one and muse upon its buried memories. Let the old landmarks remain to teach their silent lessons of veneration for the courage and virtues of our brave fathers and mothers. A thousand tender memories cluster about them. Whittier, pleading for the old pioneer manhood, takes his cue from one of these cabins and says beautifully of it:

Against the wooded hill it stands,  
Gost of a dead home, staring through  
Its broken lights on wasted lands  
Where old time harvests grew.

Of healthful herb and flower bereft,  
The garden-plot no housewife keeps;





## CHAPTER XII.

R. M. LA FOLLETTE—A DISTINGUISHED SON.



No work that purports to be a history of Primrose would be complete without a sketch of the distinguished gentleman named above. Primrose claims him as her son and the fact that she should have the honor of sending one of the sons of her first generation into the highest councils of the nation, and that that son, though the youngest in the august body in which he sat, should in the space of a very few years become one of its recognized leaders, is to her a matter of no small pride.

Robert Marion La Follette was born in Primrose, June 14, 1855, in a small log cabin on the farm at present owned by Christ Engeland. He is the son of Josiah La Follette

and Mary (Ferguson) La Follette, and comes from good French Canadian stock on his father's side. His father died while Robert was but a year old (1856) and, in 1861, Robert's mother removed to Argyle, Wisconsin.

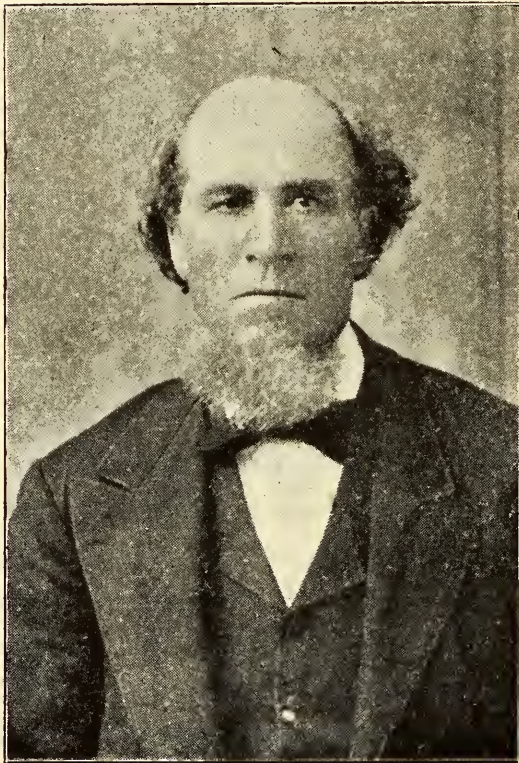
Even as a boy, Robert was noted for his fascinating power of making and holding friends. In school he was the most brilliant in his classes and excelled especially in dramatic presentation, being greatly in demand at the spelling schools, then so popular. In 1873 he attended a last few days in school No. 1 in Primrose under N. A. Abbott. Previous to 1873 his time was occupied in working on the farm in the summer time and teaching school during the winter. In that year he removed to Madison with his mother, again a widow, and entered a private academy. In 1875, he entered the State University, taking the general science course. In the university he was active in literary circles, being editor and part owner of the *University Press*. His great forte, however, lay in public speaking, and in his senior year he won a most signal triumph. Carrying off the highest honors at the university oratorical contest, he went to the state contest at Beloit and came off victorious over the best men of the colleges of the state. This made him Wisconsin's representative to the inter-state contest at Iowa City, Iowa, at which Mr. La Follette again triumphed, this time over the representatives of five states, all of whom had passed through the same ordeal. His oration, "Iago," was an original, critical, and powerful delineation of that character, and even the great Edwin Booth once declared that he had obtained new conceptions of it through Mr. La Follette's exposition. Speaking of this contest, the *Iowa City Republican* of May 8, 1879, said: "Mr. La Follette bears away the golden badge of honor without one dissenting voice among the judges, and had the question been put to the house, the unanimous answer would have been, aye!" Perhaps the proudest moment of

Mr. La Follette's life was when he stepped from the train again at Madison. The university met him in a body, accompanied by many of the most prominent men of the city and he was escorted about the town amid unbounded enthusiasm and rejoicing. Speeches were made by Hon. E. W. Keyes, Col. Wm. F. Vilas, Prof. Frankenger and others, and Geo. B. Smith summed up the glories of the hour thus: "Mr. La Follette has honored his associates in the university, he has honored the institution to which he belongs, he has honored the state of Wisconsin, and above all, and many times more important than all else, he has honored his widowed mother."

On his graduation from the university, Mr. La Follette read law in the office of R. M. Bashford, and on Feb. 5, 1880, was admitted to the bar. The same year he was elected district attorney for Dane county, and for four years served with consummate ability. In 1884 he was elected to congress by the republicans of the third district. He was the youngest man in the house, but so strongly did his personality press forth that he was recognized as the leader of the Wisconsin delegation almost from the very start, and in 1888 Speaker Reed appointed him a member of the important committee of ways and means and chairman of the committee on appropriations for agriculture. In the political landslide of 1890, Mr. La Follette went down in the general ruin, unfortunately for Wisconsin. Since his retirement from politics, Mr. La Follette has devoted himself to the duties of an increasing law practice, having been employed on practically all the important cases throughout this section of the state. He is one of the recognized powers of the state bar, being especially strong as a jury lawyer. His many friends insist that a brighter political career than ever awaits him in the future. As one says, "he can no more be kept down, than a cork can be kept under water."



Mr. La Follette is married to Belle Case, of Baraboo, herself a graduate of the university, and admitted to the bar. They have two children, a daughter and a son.



Hon. G. TOLLEFSON.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## RECENT DEATHS OF OLD SETTLERS—DIRECTORY OF NON-RESIDENT PIONEERS.



Gool G. Gunhus.

Gool G. Gunhus, died August 17, 1882. Born in Buskeruds Amt, Aggershus Stift, Norway, March 30, 1836. Came to America in 1849, worked a while in Rock county, as a farm hand, at \$3.00 per month, and lived on Jefferson Prairie until 1854, when he came to Primrose. June 8, 1862, he married Julia Lewis (Kolve), born February 6, 1841, in Voss, Bergen Stift, Norway. They had two children, Clara T., now Mrs. K. B. Skuldt, and George B. At his death Mr. Gunhus owned 329 acres of land and the best farm house in Primrose. Was a republican; supervisor in 1870-71, and a member of the Hauges Lutheran Church.

Mrs. Mons Ness (Olson), died March 11, 1886. Born April 14, 1828, in Aggershus, Norway. Came with parents to Spring Valley, Wisconsin, in 1845.

Norman Randall, died December 23, 1886. Born in Bridgewater, Oneida county, New York, December 24, 1809. Married January 2, 1842, Maria Chandler. Came to Primrose in 1851. Mr. Randall was a member of the Mt. Vernon Baptist Church.

C. F. Weltzin, died Jan., 1891. Born in Stavanger Amt, Norway, May 14, 1827; came with two brothers to America in 1854, suffering from cholera at Quebec and Chicago. Paid \$170, in 1855, for his Primrose farm (sec.

29). then a wilderness with only a roofless cabin on it. Married Maria Johanneson, who died Dec. 3, 1867, leaving five children. Married again in 1871, Monsena Jensen. They had six children. Mr. Weltzin was town treasurer three years during the civil war.

Mons Halvorson (Ness), died in 1891. Born near Christiana, Norway, Aug. 26, 1826. Came with family to America in 1846; married Aug. 28, 1851, in Spring Valley, Wis., Betsey Olson. Came to Primrose (sec. 32) in 1852, very poor, but died well off.

Bjorn O. Skuldt, died in 1892. Came with his father, Ole Skuldt, to Primrose in the earliest fifty's.

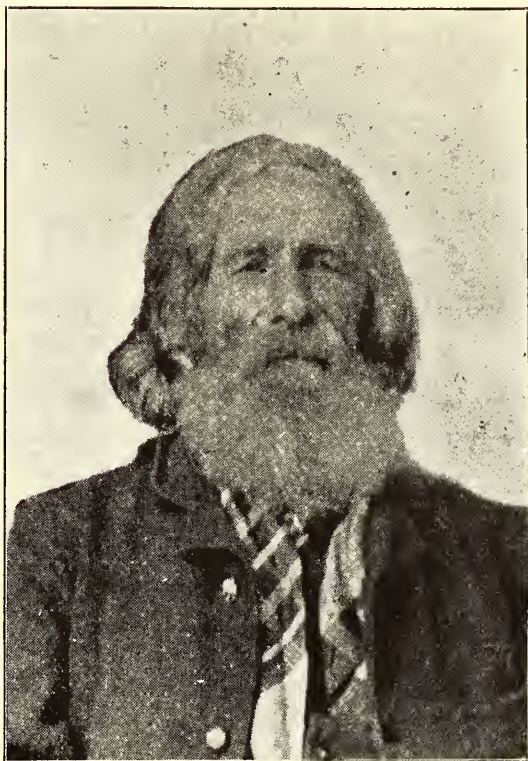
Gunnel Jackson, died near Canby, Minn., 1893. Came to Primrose with his mother and brother George in May, 1849; remained until 1866. He was in some respects a remarkable man. An educated man, he possessed a respectable library and was one of the first school teachers of the day. A thorough Republican, he fearlessly advocated negro emancipation long before the civil war and when nearly all his neighbors were Democrats. He was an extensive traveler, having visited all the Norwegian settlements in the country, and in 1854 crossed the plains to Pike's Peak. He also served through the war of the rebellion.

George Moore, died March, 1893. Came to Primrose in the early fifties, settling on government land. A prominent and wealthy farmer. Left a widow and four children.

Mrs. Julia Tollefson (Gunhus), died April 8, 1893. Mrs. T. was born near Dromme, Norway; married Gunof Tollefson, April 26, 1850, and came to Primrose in October, of the same year.

Lars L. Kolve, died at Mt. Horeb, Wis., Feb. 7, 1894. Born May 3, 1818, at Kolve, Voss, Norway. Married in 1838, Breta Kvarkval; came to America in 1850. Mr. Kolve lived two years at Muskego, Racine county, and

during 1851 helped lay the plank road from Racine to Milwaukee. In 1852 he came to Primrose and settled in section 29.



L. L. KOLVE.

Mrs. Mary Saxton, died at Madison, April 21, 1894:

“The death of Mrs. Mary La Follette Saxton, which occurred at the home of Judge Siebecker, in Madison, last Saturday morning, removes a noble woman and another of the pioneers of Primrose. Her maiden name was Mary Ferguson. She was born in Indiana, Nov. 2, 1818, of a North Carolina father and a Maryland mother. In 1840 she married Alexander Buchanan, who died a year later, leaving a daughter, Ellen, now Mrs. D. H. Eastman. In 1846, she married Josiah La Follette, of Mt. Sterling, Ky., and in 1849 they came to Primrose, settling upon the farm at present owned by Christ Engeland. The La Follettes, who figured so conspicuously in



the early history of Primrose, were loved and honored by their neighbors, for their ability, kindness and purity of life.

“Josiah La Follette served as chairman and town clerk, and his wife was active in church and school matters. The harshness and privations of pioneer life were softened to many by their kind ministrations. In 1853, Josephine, now Mrs. Judge R. G. Siebecker, was born, and June 14, 1855, Robert M. La Follette was born. In 1856, consumption carried off her second husband, and for six years she conducted the farm alone, with the assistance of her son, William, about ten years of age. In 1862, she married John Z. Saxton, of Argyle, Wisconsin, and removed to that place. In 1870, with her husband, she returned to the Primrose homestead, and three years later was again left a widow, her husband dying at the advanced age of 82. In 1873, she removed to Madison, that her children might enter the University. The brilliant career of her youngest son, from this period on, and the esteem in which her other children were held, must have been a source of pride and comfort to her in her old age. Her remains were laid to rest in the Forest Hill cemetery, and a large number of people of all classes were in attendance at the funeral.”—*Mt. Horeb Times*.

Charles Harker, died May 28, 1894. Mr. Harker was born Aug. 9, 1823, in Ellerby, Yorkshire, England; came to America in 1849; was in Canada and Illinois until 1854, when he settled in Primrose, on section 7. Married June, 1852, in Waukesha county, Elizabeth Burnell, born January, 1833, in Withenwick, Yorkshire, came to Mukwonago, Wis., 1837. Mr. and Mrs. Harker had nine children.



## DIRECTORY OF NON-RESIDENT PIONEERS.

J. Anderson Spears, Northfield, Minn.  
Mrs. Maria (Spears) Norris, Otranto, Iowa.  
Jacob Nofsinger, Valley, Wis.  
William R. Spears, Moscow, Wis.  
Isaac D. Spears, Eagle Grove, Iowa.  
Robert Ashmore, Osage, Iowa.  
Charles Lewis, Brodhead, Wis.  
W. W. Patchin, Magnolia, Wis.  
John Jones, Mt. Vernon, Wis.  
Thomas Jones, Mt. Vernon, Wis.  
Ole Nelson, Slater, Iowa.  
Mr. and Mrs. D. H. Eastman, Ola, S. D.  
Ashley C. Thomas, Wyoming, Wis.  
Eliphalet A. Thomas, Woonsocket, S. D.  
Mrs. Harriet A. (Thomas) Willis, Woonsocket, S. D.  
Mrs. Mary L. Parkinson, Fayette, Wis.  
Freeman Ash, Westley, Iowa.  
Clarke J. Lewis, Mt. Vernon, Wis.  
Peter Bell, Albany, Wis.  
Joseph A. Britts, Foxboro, Minn.  
E. M. Britts, Verndale, Minn.  
Gunof Tollefson, Mt. Horeb, Wis.  
Philander Nash, Magnolia, Wis.  
Andrew Nash, Tina, Wis.  
Mrs. Alvina (Nash) Phillips, 844 Richard St., Milwaukee.  
Harris D. Smith, Albany, Wis.  
Mrs. Sophia (Smith) Comstock, Albany, Wis.  
C. E. Patchin, Nashville, Minn.  
J. Patchin, Nashville, Minn.  
Henry Hendrickson, Sheldahl, Ia.  
Mrs. Caroline A. Osmundsen, Estherville, Ia.  
Moses Chandler, Red Oak, Ia.  
R. B. Chandler, Oregon, Wis.  
B. F. Thomas, Tomah, Wis.

Mrs. Matilda E. Arnold, Spring Green, Wis.

Mrs. C. S. Pope, Arena, Wis.

Nils N. Skogen, Blue Earth City, Minn.

Anun Gullickson, Harvard, Neb.

Mr. and Mrs. Anun Jorgenson, Clear Lake, Ia.

Mrs. Kari Oscars (Jorgenson), Belleville, Wis.

Einar Nelson, Menomonie, Wis.

George Jackson, Beloit, Wis.

H. O. Skuldt, Mt. Horeb, Wis.

Ole G. Stamn, New Glarus, Wis.

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